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# THE LIGHTWOOD TREE



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*Berry Fleming*

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The  
Lightwood  
Tree



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J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK



*There be of them that have left a name  
behind them, that their praises might  
be reported; and some there be which  
have no memorial, who are perished as  
though they had never been, and are  
become as though they had never been  
born, and their children after them . . .*

—Ecclesiasticus



# THE LIGHTWOOD TREE



ONE

*Partly cloudy and mild this afternoon, tonight and Saturday . . .*

**H**E COULD FEEL the mist beginning to rise. Leaning against a rib of the high-tension tower—"DANGER, 44,000 volts"—waiting for the bus, he could look down into the bottom of the field by the river and see the blue wisps of dampness hanging over the broomsedge, trailing in ribbons over the pink canal and the ragged pink rapids until the water was hardly pink any more. Some of it was light-wood smoke from the cabin, some, maybe, smoke from the city pulled the two or three miles up the valley on the October draft,—smoke from the cotton mills spinning night and day this uneasy autumn of 1943, from the lumber mills, the brick kilns, the teeming freight yards; but mostly it was mist.

Or time. Ribbons of time lying about in the hollows, drawn up out of the damp past; as if you might put a drop of it under one of the school microscopes and see the pattern of the history flakes that had fallen thereabout,—if they had a pattern. And the smell of the burning lightwood linking back, lightwood fire to lightwood fire—Confederate fires, Partisan, British—back in a sort of scented signal chain to the lightwood knots flaming on the stone slabs in the Creek dugouts. And back beyond that, disappearing into the time-mist.—And rising about his own ankles too, this fortieth year—

He took out of his flannel trousers the thick gold watch still redolent after all these years of June and pretty girls among the warm brick arches of Charlottesville and the rolled-up tube in his hand

that his father had kept calling his "diploma"; handing him the watch wrapped in tissue paper, polished and cleaned and marked inside the front cover, *George Cliatt, June 1925*. Your grandfather taught school by that in North Georgia.—And Dr. Cliatt had counted pulses by it in Fredericksville. And George Cliatt measured out his little doses of "education" by it, switched on and off the greatest war civilized man had so far devised—

It was nearly five-fifteen. The bus from Wrightsboro would pass in ten minutes or so,—probably "so"; the dictators might have made their own buses run on time but they had made American buses run late—

He looked up at a roaring wedge of army bombers passing beyond the wires, olive-colored in the dry sheenless tone that permeated the streets and countrysides of America as the apple-colors permeated the woods. When they had been absorbed in the pale sun he sat down on one of the concrete footings of the tower, propped his walking stick between his muddy boots and started filling a straight pipe from a paper container of tobacco—that had once been tin and might be tin again some day, if the young men of America died well. He gazed back across the hills at the way he had come, the low feminine hills like a woman on her back, lifting like a deep breath, with the long heavy sags of the cables splitting the woods upriver and down in a scar like an express highway, appearing to deviate hardly a cable's breadth in all the miles from Piedmont's gleaming generators on Clarke's Creek to—well, practically to the meter-boxes in the city a teacher was glad enough to "read" of a summer while the regular men went to Tybee on their holiday or Saint Simons—

Miles and miles in the June-July-August heat, meters, meters, meters; first one man's district then another's, one week washtubs and kettles and privies, the next roses and lawns and spinning sprinklers; in and out of yards, up and down stairs, dogs and spiders and roaches and rats. But after you got the trick of reading the little clocks at a glance, after you became, so to speak, literate, you could make as much per day as you could teaching American History in the

Academy of Frederick County. Another summer and he might have enough for a sabbatical year in the fecund stacks of the Library of Congress, filing away a Ph.D. sometime, watching all the while for an opening at the University,—finishing his “General James Jackson,” which, if he was fair about it, he ought to dedicate, “To the Piedmont Public Service Corporation, without whom—”

Crossing Oglethorpe Street in front of the olive-colored Arsenal that glittering afternoon last July and hurrying along under the high old trees of Kent, “reading Kent Street,” the fast hammer blows following him that he knew was a machine gun on the testing range in the reservation. He had never read Kent Street before, bending crossways over the sand hills, running the scale from broken screens and blistered paint to Weatherford Road and Mr. Ashby Utting’s deep wet lawn and dripping camellias that he hoped to reach before dark,—hurrying on with a long-legged stride, the meter-book under his moist arm, a short pencil stuck under the side of a ragged straw hat by his right temple, no necktie, sleeves rolled up, oblivious of everybody and everything except getting the figures into the book quickly and accurately enough to prevent comebacks by the subscribers or, worse, by the regular man when he took over again, red and peeling.

Close against the curb of “117½” he remembered seeing one of those neat brown boards that had sprouted up one morning all over the residential sections of Fredericksburg three years before when the big flag had risen in the headquarters circle at Camp Clarke. “2nd Lt. Tilton P. Cassidy.” In his book “117½” was “Mrs. Jane Cassidy,”—Mrs. Jane attending to the electricity while the lieutenant walked and crawled and slept all over Georgia and Carolina, as lieutenants had been doing for upward of two hundred and ten years, his family, back in the crooked little frame house beside “117,” inserted between the native families as his number had been inserted between the older ones when the long-empty servant quarters had been done over for him and his kind. Squinting through his damp spectacles at the meter by the kitchen porch, “Do, Lord!

Here's the electrician right now. Oh, Mr. Electrician!" And looking up at the round face of a Negro cook and beyond her at a slim young woman in a striped cotton dress with her dark hair tied back from her ears in an offhand way, an attractive, competent-looking sort of person, almost pretty in spite of the unusual pallor of her face.

When she spoke he noticed that her wide mouth was without rouge and as pale as her cheeks. "Our lights have gone off," anxiously, in one of the non-Georgia voices that had arrived in Fredericksburg in the wake of the brown name-boards.

"I'm just the meter-reader, lady." He thought he sounded like one too; as well as looked like one,—his mind running ahead to all the other clocks he had to read before night, sticking the pencil under his hat and closing the book. But standing there.

She said, "Oh," voice and eyes together, her eyes moving away to consider what to do about that.

"Sorry, Mrs. Cassidy," smiling a little, putting the book under his arm, ready to hurry on and yet unable to give the signal; then, over his shoulder, "How about the fuses?"

"If it's the fuse,—I can do most things but I don't like fuses—"

"Where's the fuse-box?" authoritatively, recalling that his experience with electric wiring ended at about the point you plugged in a floor lamp. He set the meter-book on a corner of the sink and his hat on top of it, glancing about the walls and reaching toward his hip pocket for the flashlight. He nearly stumbled over a pink-faced boy of two or three who crawled from under a table; "Whoa, chief!" touching his blond hair.

He found the little compartment, pulled it open and flashed his light brazenly into it, the cook, the girl and the child standing behind him apprehensively; he saw nothing wrong, though he doubted if he would have recognized wrong had he seen it. There was a new fuse on the shelf of the box, so he broke the switch, unscrewed the first old fuse he touched, inserted the new one and, with a brief involuntary catch in his breathing, closed the circuit. And on came the lights.

Their faces lighted up with three smiles as if they had been wired to the current,—four smiles, counting his own, which certainly should have been counted. The boy clapped his hands, the cook said, "Blessed!" and the girl planted the backs of her fingers on her hips in a quick gesture of I'll-be-damned that was gone in an instant.

Closing the box and reaching for his hat and book, "My audience is usually not so appreciative," handing the old fuse to the boy who accepted it with a mumbled acknowledgment directed at his mother.

Thanking him with a wide impersonal smile from far behind the existence of the child and turning round to two older children who had come from inside the house. He was surprised somehow the Cassidys were so many and he supposed the surprise showed on his face for her eyes seemed briefly amused as they swept across him and down to the three of them examining the fuse.

A minute later he was hurrying on to "118,"—wondering about her and the dim half-apparent contradiction in her face that he had felt almost more than seen, affirmation in the deep color of her eyes and denial in their subdued light, a dancing sensitiveness in her lips and a solemnity in their paleness; wondering if he had imagined or had really seen a sort of discord in her, a sort of light through shade—

That night in front of the fan in his two rooms in Mrs. D'Antel's basement he had taken out the notes for the dissertation on Jackson he had never even begun, notes on Jackson and much else besides, "history flakes," hints of how it was with Fredericksville when history was merely the latest news,—taken out the shoe-box file with a renewed desire to do the job, as if the noncommittal five minutes in her presence had set his own lights burning again. Sitting there staring at a card on "Wesley, Rev. John, in Fred., 1736, vid Oglethorpe," and seeing nothing but that her hair was about the color of toasted pecans, that you really watched her rather than looked at her, as if her beauty were motion and expressiveness, something existing in time,—as if she were more music than painting; putting Haydn's Ninety-ninth Symphony on his squeaky portable and

thinking she was without "glamor" as Haydn was, without much make-believe,—her hair in a part above the middle of her left eyebrow—

He glanced up at an olive-colored truck whizzing past him down the highway, then another and another, seven of them, the olive-colored young men swaying on the side benches, rifles between their knees, grinning at him, waving, vanishing down the hill beneath the high-tension tower on the curve,—leaving him with the towers and the cables boring in over his head like—a burst of tracer bullets, a burst of images suggesting his own shade behind light—

Walking out of the new-smelling hospital at Camp Clarke, months and months ago, long enough to have forgotten it, buttoning his shirt as he looked off over the blackjack at the endless rows of budding barracks, the hammers echoing on the ridgepoles, all of them in the same stage of bloom, like a field of cotton sprouts, or rather, a military company scrambling into uniform a few seconds after First Call,—fingering the earpieces of his spectacles, a thread of depression in his heart. But nine threads of exhilaration.

It was having been exhilarated. Why couldn't he have been honestly downcast? As Jit would have been,—half a world away now, his diminutive V-mail handwriting reaching back across the jungles and mountains and oceans like his faint voice over a bad telephone connection. "We folded up our mortars—"

He took the letter out of his old tweed coat, though he knew it almost by heart: "We folded up our mortars and were waiting for the time to advance, still seven minutes away, when the Nips came bursting into our lines momentarily disorganizing us. I saw one of our boys looking round the side of a big tree while a Jap looked round the other side in the opposite direction. It reminded me of playing Indian in the Courthouse yard way back in Fredericksburg, Georgia. Only more so.—P.S. Our boy saw the Nip first—"

Brother reaching back to brother, to home. Where business was booming, where safe-deposit boxes would hardly close for the new jewelry in them and the crisp cash that wouldn't show in the tax

returns. Where a man bought war bonds with one hand and turned them in with the other. Where a brother in a not-khaki coat walked over the hills on a Friday afternoon, picking up an arrowhead now and then, thinking of other things,—of a girl's face, her way of moving about. Where a man could fall in love. If he dared. Or maybe, even if he didn't dare.

The only part of it that made him downcast was the consciousness of having been infinitely relieved. He hadn't wanted to go. Afraid? Well, it was only when being afraid affected what you did that fear mattered; it hadn't affected what he did at all. He would have gone.—But it had left a shadow at the back of his mind somehow. That he didn't know how to erase, wondered if he ever could erase; that fell somehow, too, between him and love, lacing another wire into a barrier already as impenetrable as—

Impulsively, as if to get away from it, he stood up and strode down to the edge of the highway, swinging the stick through the brown tops of the weeds. A rusty truck passed him headed for the country with a load of secondhand lumber, "City of Fredericksburg" on the door, tires blubbering over the stained concrete of Highway 16,—once the "Upper Track," when an arrowhead was more than a souvenir, when Colonel Clarke came down from Long Cane and the victory at Kettle Creek, marching on the British post at Fredericksburg—

Showing it all every year to his "young ladies and young gentlemen" (as Mr. Dobit liked to call them) from the eighteenth floor of the Southeastern Trust Building,—where Fort Frederick had been and the outpost at the "White House," where the Americans under McCall had come in by the Lower Road and Clarke by Clarke Street, where the old ferry lay to Ninety-Six and Camden, the three roads, Upper, Lower, Middle, leading out across the valley from Confederate Square, all now coated with a time-patina of concrete but trailing off as before, up to Kettle Creek, down to Savannah and Parliament and the East India Company, out into the wilderness of the Creeks and Cherokees, "the tribes." Gazing down through the film of twentieth-century smoke, through the dreamy

squawking of traffic horns steaming lazily up the walls, at the long pull of this particular people out of bondage, to the Crown, to the victor, to poverty, to ignorance—

He sat on a claybank among the gray stalks of rabbit-tobacco, his thoughts swinging round to her again like the needle on a compass, round to his second meeting with her and the bare sketch beginning to fill with grays and darks and colors,—out of the anything into the this, out of sleep into life, then into now; out of merely a young woman into Allen—

A sinewy old car jerked past him with gripping brakes and came to a halt a few lengths down the highway. The rear end was covered with bright red-and-white lettering and his first thought was the car must belong to one of his more garish pupils with an extra gas ticket. But when he came closer and could distinguish the words he read, *Man! Do You Need the Lord Jesus Christ!*

“Get in, brother,” the driver said to him in a deep earnest voice, a great man in a black suit hunched over the steering wheel as if it were a toy. “How’s your soul?”

He got in and banged the thin door worn to the bone with a decade of opening and closing. “Thanks for the lift. The bus is late—”

“I’m the Reverend Sampey McCall.”

“How do you do, sir?” He told him his name.

The preacher heaved the car into first speed and after it was safely rolling turned his mahogany eyes on him in a long query. “How’s your soul, Mr. Cliatt?”

“Oh, I guess it’s all right, thank you,” George said politely.

Mr. McCall studied him ominously. “It don’t pay to guess about things like that.”

George fumbled for some reply, but his efforts were shattered abruptly by a shrill piping burst of song that seemed to come practically out of the back of his coat collar: “Let the lower lights be burning—”

He looked back into the small heart-shaped face, sooty but yet unlined and fresh, of a boy about ten years old, two large purple-

ringed eyes studying him with a calm compassion as his voice went on, now boosted from far below by Mr. McCall's bass, "Send a gleam across the wave!—Some poor fainting, struggling seaman—You may rescue, you may save."

"This is Doodye," said Mr. McCall, pronouncing it to rhyme with "two" and "die," putting the tune aside for a moment as you might take off your reading glasses to glance about the room. "Doodye is a child of God."

"Hello, Doodye," George nodded to him pleasantly. Doodye gazed past him down the highway, saying nothing.

"I've never seen anything like the way that boy's right with the Lord," Mr. McCall mumbled past his heavy shoulder.

"Where does he go to school?" George asked him.

"The Lord's work comes before school, Brother Cliatt. Particularly this time of year. Sunday's Hallowe'en."

"Why, so it is."

"This is the season when the spirits go abroad in the land. I look for most anything to happen most any time now. That's why I'm holding these special services up here I want you to bring your soul to."

Before he could answer, even if he had known how to do it, Doodye broke again into song, "Trim your feeble lamp, my brother!—Some poor seaman, tempest-tossed." Mr. McCall entered his drum-deep support as he gave the horn to a Negro in an old wagon ahead of them: "Trying now to make the harbor—In the darkness may be lost.—Sing, brother.—Let the lower—"

George lifted up his chin and joined them, glad of the song, drawn back on the tune to some country churchyard in his childhood, the Sunday voices floating through the windows and away into the blue-green needles of the cedar trees that seemed as much a part of a Georgia churchyard as the gray stones.

By the time they had sung all the verses he knew and several he didn't remember, the Upper Road had become Broad Street and the car was lurching and bouncing over the holes and the old trolley

tracks; the sweet perfume of the lightwood smoke had changed to the mean rasping scent of refuse burning. \

His eye fell on a telephone instrument as they passed a little grocery store. There was still time to call her, this Friday night, no school tomorrow,—if he wanted to hear her young voice stammering out some excuse to an old man who should have learned to be content with contentment, who should have picked up on his long way sense enough to “let good do”; if he could get his soul back from Mr. McCall—

“I’m holding a service in here, Brother Cliatt,” the preacher said, the brakes gripping petulantly again and bringing them to a spasmodic halt at the curb in front of a large house that had once been white, perched on a knoll above the sidewalk.

“In the old White House!”

“This is the Broad Street Mission. Come and worship with us.”

“I’m very much obliged to you,” George said, unlatching the door and getting out. “I’ll catch a bus in from here—”

“Forsake your evil ways, brother.” Mr. McCall leaned toward him across the torn seatcover. “Give the Lord a chance to save you.”

George said to him in a whisper, “Suppose I told you I was a Roman Catholic?”

Mr. McCall stared at him for a speechless moment then swept up his Bible from the seat beside him, scrambled out of the car and up the brick steps into the yard; George gazed after him as he strode across the porch and into the house, the boy scampering about him, before and behind, like a large dog.

The front door banged in his ears and he turned away to walk to the bus stop on the corner, wanting to smile after them and yet conscious of something restraining him, like reading one of those amazing answers on a test paper and not knowing whether to laugh or cry,—and then forgetting them with wondering, as he always did when he passed that way, if this dry old relic of a house could really have once looked down on blood and wounds and death, an old scar with the pain gone now and even the cause of it weak and faded under the time-mist, the Upper Road through the

sighing forest now merely the outer end of a city street, with tracks and buses and the blue-windowed cotton mills on the canal and the dingy houses growing like weeds down the hillside. Weatherford's Trading Post,—built on a hill because a hill kept your cellar dry and gave you a view, not of the landscape, but of danger, of who was approaching up the red road washed into gullies by the thunderstorms, a view, from the attic windows maybe, of the flag at Fort Frederick two miles down the river, of the evening smoke from the fires in the barracks, rising and, in October, settling down on the dampness, a view of silence everywhere like an early Sunday morning—

There would be a telephone over there in that filling station on the corner by the canalbank.

As he started across the street the opening lines of a hymn began to seep through the chinks of the mission: "Rescue the perishing—Care for the dying—"



"You **MUST ACCEPT** Christianity, you and your people," said the Reverend Mr. Wesley with a sad insistence, enunciating slowly and carefully in spite of himself as if these simple children of the wilderness were also a little deaf, glancing up half impatiently into the blue-green needles of the cedar trees and then out at the dozen log cabins of the settlement and the black river beyond them.

"These are Christians here at Fredericksville?" asked the old man, grave yet still good-humored as the extremely aged were sometimes good-humored, squatting there against the hairy bark of the cedar, a buffalo robe over his shoulders, his dark cheeks a web of wrinkles, his placid eyes marked with the impervious assurance of someone used to being obeyed.

Mr. Wesley nodded. He hadn't imagined these red savages would be quite like this, praying for them in the gray university, among

the rolled lawns of Lincoln, asking Mr. Oglethorpe for permission to come and minister to their heathen souls lost to salvation—

The chief shook his head with a smile. "Christians drunk. Christians beat men. Christians tell lies—"

"If you will pray, you may be shown the path."

"We believe to pray is a very wicked thing." Mr. Wesley patiently studied his slender hand that was like a tamed bird loosed in the forest, not interrupting him, watching out of a corner of his eye the soldiers raising the lightwood posts of the palisade of the fort that would hold this new land for Christ and King George. "We would not want to direct Him. He will do for everyone what is best."

"You do believe there is One above who is over all things?"

"We believe there are four Beloved Things above. The clouds, the sun, the clear sky, and He that lives in the clear sky."

"Do you think He made the sun and the other beloved things?"

"We cannot tell. We are in the dark."

"But He has often saved your life?" raising his voice a little, trying not to be exasperated.

"Yes.—But we know not if He will." The savage gazed down toward the sound of the axe notching the new log for the block-house on the river angle. "We have now so many enemies round about us that I think of nothing but death. But if He will have me to live, I shall live."

"How do you know that?"

"From what I have seen. When our enemies came against us before, then the Beloved Clouds came for us. And often much rain and sometimes hail has come upon them, and that on a very hot day. And I saw when many French and Choctaws came against one of our towns and the ground made a noise under them and the Beloved Ones in the air behind them. And they were afraid and went away, and they left their meat and drink and their guns—"

"Where do you think your soul will go when you die?"

"We believe the souls of red men walk up and down near the place where they died or where their bodies lie. For we have often

heard voices and noises near the place where any prisoners have been burnt."

"We have a Book," said Mr. Wesley, changing the subject in response to the brief shudder that passed through his body, "that tells us many things of the Beloved One above."

"The white men know much," said the chief, getting up and pulling the robe across his gaunt abdomen and looking down at the longboats piled up with supplies, lashed to the tree trunks on the bank. "We know very little. When I went across the sea with General Oglethorpe, the good white father, I saw many great houses. But white men are as short-lived as red men. Why do short-lived men build such long-lived houses? We do not understand these things," walking away to the line of eight six-pounders hauled up by the ditch and passing among them, studying each one.

"God be with you," said Mr. Wesley. "Go forth. *Christo duce et auspice Christo—*"

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MR. ASHBY UTTING tilted back in his red-leather chair, cast a glance that was at least two-thirds fatherly over the somehow charged roundness of Miss Hite's crossed knees and fixed his eyes on the upper half of the Venetian blinds from which he usually drew his dictation. "Mr. Alfred W. Whitcomb President Piedmont Public Service Corporation fourteen Wall Street New York five dear Al," he said in a breath. "Herewith warranty deed and abstract—on the two-hundred-acre river-front piece known as the Indian Mound Property. The title is clear, going back, indeed, to the original grant of the Trustees to Kennedy O'Brien in 1738—for his quote energy and enterprise in establishing the post unquote. Leave that out; make it the title is clear, paragraph. As for the adjoining parcel, numbered five on your plat, which fronts the railroad and would give direct access to the spur, I have duly presented your bid. I don't look for any insurmountable difficulties, though I understand

the present owners have been hearing loose talk that has spread some exaggerated ideas of land values. Best regards to you and the Missus from all of us.—Get that up for me right away, Miss Hite, so I can sign it before I go—”

“You haven’t forgotten about Mr. Persons Heath.”

“Looks like Heath has forgotten about me. He didn’t say *six-fifteen*?”

“*Five-fifteen*.”

He shooed her out with a facetious impatience, glancing at the twenty-to-six on the bronze desk clock his youngest had brought him one Christmas from Abercrombie and Fitch on her way home from Vassar. He thought he would wait to sign the letter and then go on home; he objected in principle to waiting half an hour, even for “associate counsel.”

He laid his hands out flat on the big desk, at which he sometimes reminded himself of the organist he subsidized for the Saint Matthew’s Methodists, interpreting the minute cryptograms of the law as effortlessly now after all these years as old Guillebeau scanned one of those endless Easter cantatas,—touching stops that opened and closed unseen pipes far up among the rafters—

He got to his feet and crossed the carpet to one of the great old-fashioned windows. Beyond was the sunburned needle of granite rising at the intersection of Greene and Monument streets, commemorating the three Georgians who had signed the paper quaintly entitled “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.” He could remember Monument Street before it became “Law Range” (“Shysters Row” to the irreverent), before any of the old houses had been converted. As a matter of fact, Biggerstaff, Brown and Utting had led the way; he could still remember the smell of dust in the clerk’s office that summer of 1919 (he had hardly got out of his lieutenant colonel’s uniform) when he, as junior member upon whom the clerk’s office fell, dug into the title of the “old Milledge place” on the corner, dug and traced and tunnelled,—one owner had been a Jerry Cushman who developed piquantly to be *Miss Jerry*.

The quarters it provided were quite elegant: wrought iron, curved marble steps with low risers, tall windows set in the swells of polygons; when the carpenters and plasterers and painters had finished, Biggerstaff, Brown and Utting really had themselves a suite of offices. Phil Brown, whose idea the whole thing had been, looked upon it all as an investment; and certainly when Piedmont had begun to feel round for East Georgia representation the elegance had been no handicap—

He heard the Courthouse clock, just visible past the edge of the blond monument, strike the quarter-hour. Sometimes he suspected Heath avoided punctuality as a matter of policy, as if to be prompt were to appear eager and simply disarm yourself. Just as the appalling slovenliness of Heath's offices down at the other end of the Range, he suspected, was a matter of policy. He remembered walking down there once many years ago: "Heath & Tullis," on a black squeaking shingle at the gate; Ace Tullis in the Legislature by another overwhelming victory; Heath, quiet on a painted kitchen chair, sitting on a liver-colored pillow with the stuffing coming out, his white head leaning against a case of dingy law books, his soft hands folded on his belt buckle,—"the little man with the big say." Mr. Utting had sat in a rocker that left him so hidden behind the dump of books and codes and papers on the table in the center that he moved to a wooden swivel chair by the window, which promptly tossed him backward until he could see his polished black shoes kicking about the window ledge. "Meant to tell you about that chair," Heath said, his wispy gray goatee quivering with mischief.

He hardly saw Heath at all, year in year out, unless something came up concerning Southeastern Trust or Piedmont. And usually that could be, and was, handled over the telephone. Anyhow, that was how it always began. He couldn't remember any other time when Heath had just called up and made an appointment. He was a little curious,—though it wasn't an entirely happy curiosity. Heath had a disconcerting way of smiling placidly at the mahogany and leather, the creamy spaciousness and order, as if it all might have been some child's harmless but transparent vanity. He also had a

way of looking you in the eye that was almost pathological. He himself looked at people when he talked to them, too, but he often found he was looking away at his thoughts or brushing the few thin hairs on the top of his big bald head and gazing here and there. Heath never seemed to look anywhere but persistently into your eye,—into both eyes—

There was a light tap on the recessed panel of the door and Miss Hite appeared with the letter and envelope in her hand; "Mr. Heath is here, sir—"

"Come in, Perse." He could feel himself invariably gag slightly at the Perse-Ashby arrangement though he knew it was only a necessary formality as members of the Bar Association, just as the court was "Your Honor" no matter how much you knew about the court's private affairs.

Mr. Heath walked slowly through the middle of the door, his black hat squarely on his head in a not too subtle defiance of the general environment, his white moustache practically twinkling with amusement. He held out his soft hand across the desk then sat down by the window on one of the red-leather chairs, crossed his chubby knees and locked his fingers over his bare shirt front.

"Ashby," he said, after a decent offhand preamble on yesterday's good rain. He paused and combed at his gray Vandyke with the points of his fingernails.

Mr. Utting waited.

"Jo Guess," said Mr. Heath in a moment, lifting his eyes for a second to a corner of the Venetian blinds before aiming them once and for all into Mr. Utting's, "you remember Jo, stopped by my office the other day—"

"I don't know any Jo Guess."

"Superintendent up here at the Stockade,—you know Jo."

"Oh," Mr. Utting admitted charily.

"I talked to Jo a long time." He uncrossed his legs and dragged the chair to an end of the desk. "Doc Buden, you know," he smiled, "That Good Man,'—is building a little fishing camp up on Kettle

Creek. Little pond, little clubhouse there for week ends, get-togethers."

Mr. Utting said he believed he had heard something about it.

"Well, what with the war on and defense-construction and all that, Doc's been having trouble getting enough labor to finish up the job. Naturally he wants to get it finished. I talked to Doc a couple of weeks ago. He asked me if it wouldn't be perfectly all right to take some of the city employees up there on their vacation; give them a chance to make a little extra something and help him out the same time. I told him I didn't see how anybody could object to a man doing what he wanted with his own time.

"He said there were several old city trucks not doing anything and it looked like they might as well be hauling stuff up to Kettle Creek as sitting there going to pieces under a shed. He said when there was a fire you used city equipment on a private project." Mr. Heath chuckled a little under his shirt buttons. "I said, 'Now, hold on there, Doc. You put out a fire, don't you, to maybe keep it from burning the whole town down.' But of course there are many times the city does something for a citizen just out of courtesy. I know many a time the engine company's sent one of its ladder trucks to clean out my gutters. Just out of courtesy.—Well, it all ended up by me telling Doc that, though he didn't have any right to just take the trucks, still it was certainly not unprecedented for city equipment to be granted a citizen just out of decency and politeness and courtesy."

There was a pause but Mr. Utting did not appropriate it; instead he rocked once or twice back and forth on his leather cushion and made a tent out of his tanned fingers.

"Of course the city employees on their vacation time have been fine for the skilled jobs; there were two or three carpenters among them, a couple electricians, some plumbers. But there was a lot of rough work too. Doc had to cut a road down the creek from the ford, had to grade through an old cane patch, all sort of things.—Now the Stockade out here is crowded. You know that. They don't have room. Sometimes, Ashby, as you know, they just have to open

the gate and tell some of the short-terminers to go ahead; just isn't room for everybody. And that's what Jo Guess wanted to see me about. Somebody had suggested, he couldn't remember who, that knowing the fix Doc was in for labor, it would be a nice thing if, instead of turning these fellows loose on the town again, they let 'em go up to Kettle Creek and help Doc. That Good Man didn't ask for them, you understand. No pressure put on anybody. Just a call for volunteers—"

"Perse, what you telling me all this for? I never said a dozen words to Doc Buden in my life; I never been interested in politics and I'm not going to start at my age."

"Politics sort of like a war, Ashby; if the other fellow's interested, you best be interested too." Mr. Heath's stomach shook up and down until he began to cough.

"What you want me—"

Mr. Heath shed his laugh abruptly. "I just don't want Doc to go too far. You know Doc. Honest as the day is long. Salt of the earth. Give you the shirt off his back. But Doc likes to run things."

Mr. Utting squinted at him as if trying to read the answer in fine print on Perse's bland forehead.

"I'm just thinking if anybody ever needed to dam up the river or anything like that it would be a lot better to have somebody here like Doc you can count on to do the right thing—"

"He's not fixing to retire, is he?"

"I mean if Doc goes too far, well—now and then people do get mad. They'll take almost anything if you lead 'em up to it easy and keep it impersonal, but—I just don't want Doc to some day get to thinking he's one of these dictators and really step on somebody—"

"Tell him—"

"I'm not worried over what's already happened. I wouldn't put it in the paper, but even if everybody knew about it, it wouldn't amount to anything because it's not personal. It's all right if you step on a lot of people as long as you don't step on one—"

"Don't let the *Journal* get hold of it."

"Doc could,—it's not likely, but Doc could let the fish get in the fire—"

"Has he already used the convicts?"

"Couple truckloads of 'em up there now."

"He better put them back in the Stockade. I don't reckon it's 'peonage' but—where'd he get all that gasoline?"

Mr. Heath rose and settled his hat on the front of his head so that the flat brim extended out from his eyebrows. "He put in ten A-tickets of his own," he said, watching Mr. Utting as if to see how long it would take him to add that up and thinking it might take him a good while.

"That's thirty gallons. That's about three hundred miles in a truck. How far is it up there?"

"It's seventy-three and four-tenths miles from City Hall steps."

"That's enough for about two round trips. How many trips he made?"

Mr. Heath ran his fingernails a couple of times through his right eyebrow. "So far he's made eight."

Mr. Utting turned his head slowly until he was gazing straight at him, then turned it back to one of the Venetian blinds. After a silence he said, "How many people know about all this?"

"It's closely held," Mr. Heath smiled. "I'm not worried about the people—"

"You better see Doc, Perse. Tell him leave the taxpayers out of Kettle Creek—"

|||||

GRANDMOTHER JENREE GOT down on her knees and peeped through the crack at the bottom of the closed window shutters at the red-coat men on the horses rocking down the hill to Kettle Creek and the ford, the cabin turning cold with the ashes dumped over the fire to kill the smoke, their three heads motionless along the sill, gray and jet black and the boy's as fair as honey. They scarcely

breathed except to count, watching the endless stream of horses, the harness-metal jangling loud over the silent hoof-falls muffled in the sand, well-fed horses, throwing their heads, and the men laughing, riding easy. Counting, counting, lifting out a finger at every hundred and getting to the end of her left hand and the horses still coming out of the blackjack.—Fredericksville gone, the river gone, half Georgia gone, and your neighbors turning their coats all round you for fear they'd be caught with a dead cause—

How many? That was always the first question the ragged ones asked. How many, granny? How many, gammer? Looking at the girl, if she was anywhere to be seen,—and she usually was, with her black eyes and a husband they hadn't heard from in the Lord knew when—

There were six hundred and twenty-four horses, counting the pack animals following head-down on a halter. She wrote it out with an icy squeak on Eli's slate: Horses 624, Men 532, Wagons 0, as the blue-eyed captain with the buff cockade in his leather cap had showed them. "They're headed this way," calling her "mither," though none of his other words sounded Scotch, his arms flung out on the table round a bowl of porridge, haggard, lean, not looking like a soldier for all his hunting shirt and leggings and knife in his belt, though he told them how he wanted them to count in no uncertain words,—looking at the girl too, at Nollie Carter's wife, with a boy, seven, and a two-year-old asleep behind the spinning wheel—

And then in the night a tapping on the shutter and reaching down beside the cot for the squirrel gun and the captain coming again, "Captain Bruce," she remembered because the girl remembered, who hadn't any business to remember. Giving him the numbers and Eli telling him about the camp below on Kettle Creek between the canebrake and the ford, parching corn and slaughtering some cattle and eating like they were starved though they looked fat enough—

And just at sunup, standing on the log step of the cabin in the February wind, the robins plump and still, in the bare branches,

and watching the ragged ones go by, on foot, bowing their heads against the drag of the heavy sand and against the wind but managing to look too, every last one of them, at the way the wind blew the girl's skirts between her legs, thinking more about that than what was ahead of them, as, God help them! why shouldn't they, or she would have sent the girl inside; then, after they had passed, turning to the task before her, which she knew well enough with thirty-two years on this edge of the savage world and hardly one of them without a man stretched out on the table there torn by a ball or a flint or a tomahawk—

Sending them off to the spring, "Give Eli a bucket, Thursa." "What they all hunting each other for, grammer?" "Fetch the water, boy." "How come they—" "Fetch the water!" Questions she couldn't answer anyhow,—a lot of fool man-talk about liberty and independence, like it mattered a dang whose country it was in which you cooked and scrubbed and loved and forgot how it was to love and died,—lifting the big black kettle on the crane hook with both hands and filling it with spring water, swinging it round into the chimney, standing back for the girl to drop a new pine log heavy with rosin on the fire, because they would want the water boiling, and the gunshots already echoing up the slope. "I want to go down yonder where I can see!" "You ain't going anywhere. Help your ma cut up that bedsheet." "But, jiminy, listen to all them squirrel guns!" She took the gingham cloth off the table, folded it and handed it to him to put in the cupboard; then she got out the bucket of lye soap and scrubbed the smooth boards, thinking of the last man who lay there, a white-quartz war-point buried in the side of his neck,—only it wasn't white but red and shining like the winter berries on the firethorn bush—

And then the blue-eyed captain, beneath his sunburn as gray, somehow, as linsey-woolsey, hanging on a man's shoulder, limp as a new-shot turkey, a hole in the top of his hunting shirt as big as a shilling; and men on the floor and in the beds, oozing their bright-red blood, and others outside laughing and talking of "the

great victory" and the "war as good as won,"—this windy Sunday in 1779—



WALKING OUT INTO Broad Street that was always to him the Upper Road, the time-mist now only the thin sticky smoke of burning refuse, faintly acid, fingering the Indian rocks in his pocket that were hardly distinguished enough even to swap to old man Jenree hunched over his counters of books and relics like a little animal feeding—

He could buy something to drink at the filling station. While he added and subtracted at the problem of whether to telephone her,—changed signs, cleared of fractions, removed parentheses. As if he were figuring the weight of the world, or how far it was to Betelgeuse. And maybe he was; maybe if he figured it right he would find it was a lot farther than he could ever reach again. And he would have saved himself no end of tears.

If there was no telephone over there he would let that decide it. Or if somebody was using it. And besides, it oughtn't to be just any telephone; it ought to be clean, warm to the touch, spotless and bright. "How about going to the movies?" He despised the movies—

From the middle of the street the words, "MAC & JACK" in quotation marks on the front of the station suddenly became clear, though the sentence under them was still as undecipherable to him as Arabic; coming closer, he read, *If you can't stop, smile as you go by.* He read it again to be sure, then walked on toward a slack-shouldered young man leaning against one of the pumps, dressed in khaki with a black leather bow tie; he had a brash, good-humored, freckled face that fitted the spirit of his slogan. "I wonder if you happen to have any coca-colas."

The young man looked at him for a second, his freckles going into a wide grin. "Why,—hey, P'fessor!"

The boy's features began to come out of the strangeness like some-

one walking into light,—into half-light, for he couldn't remember his name even though a gawky figure did begin to emerge out of the mist standing on one leg in the aisle between the desks, fumbling through his grabbag of ragged information, his yellow-streaked hair still wet at the early classes, a good-hearted boy with a kindly contempt for books. "I reckon you don't remember Jack Winn. I quit after freshman year; had to go to work."

George said he was glad to see him again and held out his hand.

"Coca-cola? Sure. We just got some in an hour ago. They're hard to get." Winn lifted the top of the red icebox and fished round in the water. "Still doing business at the old stand, P'fessor?"

George told him he was still at it, asked him about himself.

"We doing all right. Until this gas rationing came along. There's plenty gas in Georgia." He popped the cap off a bottle and held it out. "But if Uncle Sam wants the gas rationed then we gonna ration the gas. It don't worry me. I reckon my local board's gonna want to see me pretty soon anyhow."

George laid a dime on the edge of the container. "Have one with me."

But Winn pushed the coin away from him disdainfully, not even looking at it. He stirred about in the water and pulled up another dripping bottle. "What you think of the team we got this year, P'fessor?"

"I guess I ought to be ashamed to tell you, but—I haven't seen it."

"Haven't seen it!" He stared at George across the bottle. "You going tonight, though?"

"What's tonight?"

"With Staug Hi."

"With what?" George laughed.

"Saint Augustine High School, P'fessor."

"You mean they're sending a football team all the way up here from Saint Augustine?"

"And they're hot too—look at that truck! See that!" He pointed the neck of the bottle suddenly out into Broad Street. "There goes another one, Mac!"

George looked over his shoulder at a truck of lumber grinding stolidly up the slope in front of the old White House.

"See that 'C-of-F' on the door? That's a city truck, P'fessor. It's headed for Mr. Doc Buden's fishing camp. What you know about that, Mac?"

Mac came to the door of the office in a halo of radio dance music; he glanced up and down the sidewalk. "I know you better watch your big mouth, that's what I know."

Winn laughed, "There goes that October installment on your taxes, Mac." Then he said to George, "Mac's building the Boss a fishing lodge up on Kettle Creek."

Mac chewed down on the end of a match. "You putting the shingles on his roof."

"And p'fessor's laying the floor."

He smiled at them, fingering the points in his pocket. He could see a telephone on the desk inside straight past Mac's trouser belt. "Driver's old friend of Mac's."

"He just doing what they tell him—"

"That lumber you saw, P'fessor, come out of a city building being tore down. And I'll tell you something else. He took fifteen convicts up there from the City Stockade; they said they were gonna be let loose for working up there."

The boy looked at him and he knew he was expected to respond. He didn't know what his response was,—beyond knowing that he had his own life to worry about, that nothing could happen on Kettle Creek as important as what could happen on that telephone in there. Of course he cared, but—maybe it wasn't so; things like that grew with every telling—

He put the bottle to his lips and poured the rest of the stinging liquid down his throat. "You really believe all that?"

Winn looked at Mac. "Listen to p'fessor! P'fessor, I'm gonna have to give you a bad mark." Mac laughed and Winn, encouraged, went on: "Have you studied this lesson, P'fessor?" Mac slapped his hand in glee against the doorpost.

"I guess I have to admit I haven't," George said good-naturedly.

"You stay in after class, P'fessor." Winn turned away to an old car that had stopped beside one of the pumps, uninhibitedly delighted with himself. "Yes, sir! You stay after class.—Fill her up, mister? I mean, how many ration tickets you got—catch that phone, will you, Mac?"

He watched Mac move back into the office, flop down on a chair and pick up the telephone. "Mac and Jack, Mac talking—"

Well, let it be an omen then. Oglethorpe had drawn straws at the invasion of Saint Augustine; John Wesley had drawn straws whether or not to marry Miss Sophia—

He waved at their cheerfully impudent friendliness and returned across the street to the bus stop. He got aboard, nodded to the driver (you could never tell when you might be nodding to one of your "parents"), dropped a nickel in the box and sat down. Through the open window as the bus climbed the slope of the canal he looked down for a moment into the sheets of thin smoke lying across the field beyond the filling station; the Negro, swinging a pick far over by the bank, seemed almost to be working knee-deep in a shallow pond—



IT WAS TWENTY minutes to six when Wanzo started digging. He had taken out Edna, the gray mule, hitched the plowline round the felly of the wheel and walked off with the handle of the shovel in his black-pink hand, the blade drumming on the bed of the empty wagon until it fell off into the clay.

He had prayed the Lord for a good lightwood stump before frost. And there it was, fat as a pig, the sticky rosin in pearl-gold beads on the top, the edges crusted with a wet white like a honeycomb. It was funny about praying. You prayed for something and if you'd been living right the Lord handed it to you. "Lord don' like bad," the preacher said—

He jabbed the shovel into the ground in two or three places. It wasn't going to be easy to get out, with the pebbles in the clay and

the little rocks, but he ought to get done with the biggest part of the digging in a couple of evenings if he stopped by for an hour or so before dark. It would take another evening to chop the branch roots, which wouldn't come to anything much in a pine tree, and to hit the old taproot down under there as big as your leg; then, maybe on the fourth or fifth, he would run the plow chains round it and hitch up the mule and, with a prayer, out she'd come—

Maybe there was a right time to pray, just like the right time to put in your cotton was when the moon was light and the right time to get up a lightwood stump was after a wet spell. Because he remembered just exactly when he had prayed. He had been rolling down Broad Street one morning on the way to Cotton Row, the bale of cotton in the back of the wagon, and he had been saying to himself all the way in from the country that it wouldn't be long now before the cold weather was due and he would be wishing he had himself a lightwood stump by the front door and some of those ham-colored chips that would start a fire on a cold morning as quick as Mr. Utting's Willie Mae could turn the handle on that big gas stove,—rolling down along the curbstone to give the cars and buses room to pass, when he heard the singing in the old White House: "You should never be discouraged—Take it to the Lord in prayer."

And he just took it to the Lord right then as he passed in front of the house. And when he opened his eyes, there were the stumps as big as life, not one but three, four, five stumps, off in the field back of the man's filling station by the canal, and he nearly fell off the seat of the wagon with the swimming in his head.

Of course he couldn't just light out into somebody's field and start digging up a stump. But he knew what to do. Oftentimes there were two parts to praying; you prayed the Lord, then you talked to Mr. Utting. They were sort of in it together, like God and Moses. He got himself a good load of dairy compost from Mr. Flew and carried it to Mr. Utting one evening for his camellias. "Whose is them light'ood stumps over yonder by the canell, Mr. Ashby?" "What stumps?" "Way over yonder by that haunted house. Across the canell front of the mills,—in that field under them Public Serv-

ant wires." "Go on dig yourself a stump, Wanzo. Anybody say anything to you tell him come see me." Mr. Utting had enough money to build a bank—

He laid the shovel down on the damp clay, got the mattock and the pick out of the wagon and started breaking the ground in a circle round the stump—



GEORGE LOOKED OUT of the bus window at the leaves of the sidewalk trees, almost clay-colored. *Tawny are the leaves turned, but they still hold. It is the harvest; what shall this land produce?* What, indeed, Mr. Poet? "We need education, George, the way we need rain in August," said old Mr. Dobit, years ago, showing him round the little Seventy-first District Schoolhouse to which the old man had been transferred; "if we don't get it pretty soon the crop may be ruined. I'd like to see you come back home and teach in Fredericksville,—under that flag," smiling out at the weatherbeaten pole in the sandy circle and the broad bands of the State flag flying idly under the Stars and Stripes—

He could imagine Mr. Winn talking to his son in the spring of the first year of high school: "It's time you went to work, Jack; when I was a boy I was drawing a full day's pay at your age,"—sending their young to school more or less as you sent your dog to the firehouse for rabies shots, because you were told to, not really putting much faith in it probably, seeing no "results." Education was vocational training; they looked forward to, someday, a better machine shop, to more typewriters in the stenography class. He remembered planting an acorn when he was a boy and watering it and going out the next morning to see if it had sprouted; they wanted to see some sprouts—

"You've taught 'up there,' George. You've had experience. You can help us,—in our great need. Of which we're only half aware." Principal of William Longstreet that year, largest of the city's eight

grammar schools, talking to him seriously in the office,—ten years ago, home for a few days to bury “Dr. George.” Gazing at the street crossing and the children at recess running, crowding in and out of a down-at-heel shop on the corner, standing about the door with crackers and cakes and bottled drinks, “See that lunch counter over there? One of my children was knocked down last week running across that street. I’m just about to sign an order putting a stop to it. And when I do there’s going to be trouble. That lunch counter’s owned by a member of the School Board.—Excuse me a second.” Signing a paper, handing it to a young woman, turning back to George with a smile: “What with one thing and another, I may not be principal here when you get back home next time.”—One letter from him about it a year or so later, written from the Seventy-first District, R.F.D. 2, “The court ruled the Board had discretion in the duties it assigned school personnel but not in reducing a salary,”—a sort of firm quarter-grin undoubtedly pulling at one side of his mouth. “So now the highest-paid principal in the system is living and working in the country, looking out, today, over the old cross-road where Clarke marched in to take up position for the relief of Fredericksburg, looking out at spring in the valley. The dogwood trees are white like country butter—”

And he had come back home,—though it was hard to remember exactly why. Certainly not for any “big” reason; certainly not “to help us in our great need.” It was the little personal reasons that mattered, if you could recognize them under the finery they liked to wear; vaguely uncomfortable up there in front of an alien background, belatedly homesick maybe at “spring in the valley.” Lonesome too, wounded (he had almost forgotten her name now), thirty-three and “getting old,” if you please. As if it wasn’t how old you really were that mattered, or even how old you felt, but how old you seemed to someone you loved; he had been old that year. Old, and afraid, maybe, of the swift current. Anyhow, the way ahead seemed dark and he turned aside. And the wound all tightly healed now; not a trace; like the obscure death of some minute hero far back under the time-mist. *And some there be which have no memorial,*

—unless his fear of calling Allen was its memorial, his fear of discovering again he was old. How old was he in her eyes? If he only knew.

That Wednesday afternoon in the week before school started, walking to the Summerville branch of the Post Office, through with meters, his pay envelope in his pocket stuffed with Piedmont money he was turning into a war bond; he had a letter too, he remembered quite well, to Jit out in those boundless spaces beyond "APO 707, San Francisco" and also, which was more to the point, for there seemed to be some indeterminate connection between her and his file of notes, a letter trying to interest a publisher in somebody called James Jackson—

He would have said he hadn't thought much about her those last few weeks; shifted from district to district as the regular men returned, arguing with himself like a motorist trying to talk his way out of a traffic ticket. And making some progress with it. One day he even strolled down Kent Street, which wasn't far from Mrs. D'Antel's, and looked coolly at the marker by the curb, just to show himself he could, grateful the memory of her was dying down. Going through the relaxed routine of summer,—working on the Jackson, finishing a piece for the *Journal of American History*, slipping off on Sundays with Mr. Dobit and his wife to "wet a line" in the black spillway of the old Coffey grist mill, all of it under the comfortable, foliage-muffled sounds of summer; wondering about her now and then, her subdued paleness, her almost faded manner, about what he obscurely felt was a shadow across her life, his interest directed, he would have honestly declared, toward the human being in her rather than the young woman. Maybe, by that time, Lieutenant Cassidy and his family had been transferred; if so, well—

Then, against the bronze-fronted pigeonholes of the little Post Office, seeing her shoulders ahead of him at the stamp window and feeling his lungs lifting and quietly filling with the warm late-summer air. He had wondered if he would speak to her and decided he would not, partly because she would certainly fail to

remember him and partly because his life was in order, his windows closed against love's thunderstorms—

Then she had picked up her stamps, looked straight at him for a second without much appearance of surprise and nodded. And he had reached for his hat and found he was bareheaded and tried to hide his awkwardness by hastening up to the window. "Good evening, Mrs. Waite; I want a little war bond." "Mr. Cliatt, a man came in yesterday to buy a war bond and I asked him what denomination and he said, 'Baptist—'"

Coming out and finding her standing with the child by the wall along the red-clay sidewalk, waiting for him, without any pretense.

"How do you do, Mrs. Cassidy?"

She lifted her chin in an easy laugh. "I'm not Mrs. Cassidy."

"You know, I somehow knew you weren't!"

"Mrs. Cassidy is a young friend of mine. Jeff and I—this is Jeff," with a gesture careless yet affectionate too, "we went over to stay with the children so she could go up to Richmond; her husband had a few days before the division went to PE,—I mean Port of Embarkation," her voice drifting downward.

Turning tacitly and walking along to the threadbare little park, stopping while he pointed out to the child a gray squirrel industriously digging for the winter. When the squirrel heard them, popped upright like a spring, wrists curled over his chest, George whispered to the boy, "You see, he says, 'Who, me?'" And the squirrel scampering away up a blackgum tree in spurts, stretched out like a miniature bear rug,—the lower leaves scarlet among the blue-green, giving off a color of purple, shimmering, alive as a lake.

They sat down on a broken bench in the violet shade, Jeff playing with a toy comfortably within a corner of her eye. He offered her a cigarette and she looked at the brand and with a laugh took another kind out of her pocketbook. Letting him light it for her and looking away, "No, we're visitors.—I brought Jeff to visit his grandparents. It's a long 'visit' but still—I think it remains a visit."

"Your husband's in the Army?"

"No," she said quietly, pausing, then looking at her cigarette and

going on in a simple almost kindly way as if not wishing him to feel any embarrassment, "My husband was killed a year ago in January. In an air raid on a place called Munda." She covered the slight bitterness in her voice by continuing quickly, obviously not wanting any perfunctory sympathy, "We've been here almost four months.—Mr. and Mrs. Henry Estes?" She looked at him inquisitively.

"I'm undoubtedly friendly with their meter but—"

"It's the nice old house next door. They fixed up the little place in the yard for army people.—I was very embarrassed about the fuse. We'd only been down here a week or so and I hated to go over and tell Mother Estes I'd smashed the lights; they'd asked us to come and live with them and to begin by being so clumsy—"

"It's not clumsy to blow a fuse," with a ridiculous desire to defend her, wondering how it would be coming to a small city where acquaintanceship was so closely knit, conscious of a warm maturity about her in spite of her youth, no doubt on account of what she had been through.

"They've been wonderful to us," she said. Then, looking away at a man dragging a gray sack into a mail truck, "But it's not easy living in somebody else's house, even when you're wanted, which we really are. Jeff was their only child. Having his child with them now—well, it means a lot." She was silent for a minute and he looked at the profile of her lips, parted for a second as if in remembrance of other things, then closed as if sensing he was looking at her.

She talked to him with a frankness he found attractive, maybe for itself, maybe for its being un-Southern and strange to him, of meeting Jeff when he was a cadet in the Air Corps, of their marriage that spring of 1940 in her father's white farmhouse in Ohio among the grazing lands and the herds of fat cattle. "We were living in a trailer outside of El Paso when the baby was born," she smiled slightly, offered him a cigarette which he declined, took one herself and lit it quickly before he could find his matches.

Then she looked at him in an inquisitive silence and he said

something he had been wanting to say for many weeks. "I'm not really an electrician—"

"I know. You're a schoolteacher." She laughed at his surprise; "I saw you one day from a bus, coming out of the school down there."

"How did you know I hadn't been called in to replace a fuse in the chem lab?" thinking it must have been the morning last week he had stopped in to check his schedule, absurdly pleased at the difference in that moment from knowing now she had been looking at him—

"You look like a teacher. Or rather, you don't look like an electrician."

"What do teachers look like?"

"Teachers are missionaries—in a nice way."

"I'm no part of a missionary—"

"Maybe you don't really look like a teacher," smiling at him appraisingly, friendly yet curiously self-contained, from quite a distance off. "I think of teachers as more—well, overgrown with ivy."

"I sometimes feel overgrown with ivy and moss and lichens and algae and fungus and mushrooms." Then he heard those words that seemed to be always creeping out of his thoughts in one form or another in spite of all he could do: "I thought the Army was going to brush away all that for me. But they didn't like my eyes." He was sorry he had said it; there was no reason to explain that to her. Or to anybody else.

She looked at him as if she hadn't noticed his glasses before, though of course she must have. "I know how it is," she said, and her tone seemed somehow to include not only an understanding of what he had said but of his wanting to say it.

And he found himself blurting out the other thing, "And then too, I'm practically forty."

She drew in on her cigarette and flicked it away as if she smoked a lot. "I don't know what your name is but I'd like to tell you this: if they want you, go and do your best, but if they don't, then forget it,—and thank God." She looked at him seriously. "Don't let it bother you."

"Well, I suppose I could get a war job."

"Education's a war job."

"I don't know.—I guess I really just like it here."

"You like teaching?"

"I like history."

"You're probably a good history teacher then.—Come on, darling, get yourself together."

Going on talking, trying to delay her. "The trouble with teaching history is you don't know what happened. One side says this, the other, that. If you could say, 'Here, boys and girls, is precisely the way it was at the Battle of Bloody Marsh,'—if you could show something occurring in sample after sample, well, it might help set us straight on where we are today.—My name, by the way, is George Cliatt."

"My name's Allen.—Here we go, darling." And Jeff on the ground, looking up at his mother, then at him, then curling his wrists over his chest with a laugh, "Who, me?"

Out of sleep into life, out of summer into—thou latter spring—

Telling his class on the opening day, the world subtly different from talking to her, knowing they wouldn't hear it in the way he said it but wanting to say it anyhow, his hands folded on the closed textbook beside the big gold watch, "You can't destroy history. We may not know what happened, but it happened, once and for all. And you and I are the sort of people we are because it happened. We remember being licked by the tough boy in our block and we'd do well to remember what happened over at the old White House that September, a hundred and sixty-three years ago next week—"

He felt the bus jog into second speed for the long climb up the hill and he looked out of the window at the Academy Stadium and the Negro workman raking the stiff magnolia leaves from the entrance paths. Staug Hi!—"Do you happen to recall, young ladies and gentlemen, another expedition from Saint Augustine into Georgia?"

He thought he would ask them that on Monday morning. He knew how it would be. They would not happen to and he would

prompt them further, knowing he was sacrificing the camaraderie he had momentarily established through referring to a football game in class by now flinging at them the hideous realization that professor hadn't shaken off the dust of history after all, "There were some seven thousand young men in that expedition and the sentry on the Georgia beach at Fort William looked out through the July daybreak and counted 'fifty-one sail.' He probably counted a lot more, because it's hard to count when your blood pressure is rising and in all probability his was rising, though history is silent on that detail. Whose ships were they, Abbott?" And Abbott would say they belonged to the Yankees. "They belonged to His Catholic Majesty the King of Spain. And they were setting out on nothing less than a full-fledged conquest of the thirteen British colonies in North America. Some of you have been down to Saint Simons Island in the summer. Well, there were a number of young men from here who spent the summer of 1742 at Saint Simons—"

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ON A WEDNESDAY afternoon early in May, Lieutenant Henry Edward Augustus Kent, a young man with a slightly pink moustache and some Devon color still clinging in his cheeks in spite of the swamps and fevers of this God-forsaken little stronghold of his Majesty's Forces on the British Establishment in North America,— Lieutenant Kent was standing on the terreplein of Fort Frederick beside one of the brass six-pounders General Oglethorpe had sent him, watching Sergeant Voyles and the militia company at drill in the quadrangle, the strong rhythm of the drummer reaching up now and then in a cracked echo off the logs of the barracks—

"I want you to raise a company of militia from the settlement," the gaunt general sitting there with him in the blockhouse on the river angle, his blue eyes still sunk with fever, passing through on his way back from three hundred miles through the "most howling wilderness" to meet the Assembled Estates of the Creek Nation. "I

found the tribes well-disposed and I have concluded an alliance with them, which secures our flank against the blow I look for," drawing in the muscles of his eyes,—glancing out at Kent's worn volume of *The Historye of Henrie the IV<sup>th</sup>* on the wall shelf and going on, probably without seeing it. "That will come from the south and when it falls I shall want every man of the regular establishment." A fine, stern, just commander, hardly able to sit his horse as he passed out under the gatehouse but pulling himself up to take the salute of the garrison—

Over the points of the palisade he caught sight of a man on horseback coming out of the forest by the Lower Track at an earnest canter, appearing and disappearing beyond the low clapboard roofs, a trail of white dust rising behind him. It was probably the messenger from Savannah, though Thursday was the usual day.

His first thought, as always now, was that the man might have the long-delayed answer to the letter he had written Colonel Stephens about the slaves. Listening to young Weatherford, there beside the cannon, six months ago, "I surprised a man this morning drinking at my spring." Coming in to the fort from his plantation up the river on Garden Hill that was really a trading post,—on the outskirts of the settlement, where he could get a first choice of the pelts. "He was an African, Mr. Kent." "There are no Africans in Georgia." A runaway slave from Carolina, maybe, trying to escape to the Spaniards? "No, sir." He asked him whose he was and the African pulled a crumpled pass out of his shirt; "He was O'Brien's black. O'Brien bought him in Carolina, brought him in three or four months ago with seven others—"

He remembered looking off at the tar-and-sand roof of O'Brien's new brick storehouse, thinking he could all but see the treetops of the upriver tract the Trustees had granted him "and the heirs male of his body for his energy and enterprise in establishing the post."—"I can use a pair of good bucks myself, Mr. Kent, and I can pay for 'em—"

Strolling down the Bay Street, not liking the errand, knocking at O'Brien's new pine doorpost, the walls still smelling of rosin;

brushing his moustache right and left as O'Brien's young Flemish wife strode off with a certain equivocal jauntiness to tell her husband, her round hips rocking against the light from the back door and leaving him lonesome with the breeze ruffling the placid ebony river and lifting and lowering the speck of British authority on the flagstaff over the blockhouse at the South Gate—in strondes afar remote—

Talking against O'Brien's massive assurance: "There's a clause in our charter, Mr. O'Brien, prohibiting the importation of slaves—"

"Son, when I talked to Mr. Oglethorpe seven years ago about building the King's fort up there, my idea was to protect the trade, turn it out of Charleston into Savannah. I didn't intend the military to come up here with a little book of rules—"

"The Trustees, Mr. O'Brien,—"

"The Trustees, son, are sitting out their breeches in London. They don't know a tomahawk from a peace pipe. You can't build a colony without slaves; progress has got to come out of somebody's sweat.—Why, I've heard Mr. Whitefield with my own ears say what a blessed thing it was to bring these ignorant children over here to a Christian land where they could be taught the way to salvation." His heavy shoulders shook with a good-natured chuckle.

"The only thing that concerns me, Mr. O'Brien, is the regulations it's my duty as a soldier to enforce. Colonel Stephens in Savannah—"

"Will Stephens is an old friend of mine—"

Writing in his quarters by rushlight, the swarm of mosquitoes and September insects singing about the flame, reporting the whole thing in detail to Savannah, it being something more than the usual sort of matter he settled out of hand: a prompt decision seemed advisable for others there might want to import blacks . . . prepared to send O'Brien down in the patrol boat in the custody of Mr. Portwood, the subaltern . . . would the colonel give him an indication of what his pleasure was?—Continuing with lesser matters: his need of a second garrison boat was somewhat urgent;

"the number of pack horses that have passed through since my last—"

Nineteen days later a letter from headquarters informed him there was a sound and serviceable craft available in Savannah and he should send four boatmen to bring it up. Two or three other little details of administration and the clerk moved aside for the pen of C. J. S. Marston, Adjutant, signing for Colonel Stephens.—Nothing more.

Of course there were plenty of things a lieutenant didn't understand; things breaking now and then through the surface explanations like little noises breaking into your sleep on a still night that might be a sturgeon leaping in the river or the snort of an alligator or the rubbing of a paddle on a dugout. He didn't deny the colony was "philanthropic," "benevolent," "a place where the unsuccessful at home might have a new start in life"; but a glance at a map showed the strange coincidence that elements of the fleet posted at New Inverness and Saint Simons would command the Bahama Passage and the galleons of Peruvian silver out of Porto Bello bound home for Cadiz. And did one really need a general with a full-strength regiment to plant a colony? Or was Georgia more of a battleground, quite coolly interposed between the King's colonies and the enemy, more of a military post, defensive and, possibly, offensive too? "One plants a colony," his Uncle Edward used to say, lifting the skirts of his coat to warm his bottom at the fire, "as one plants grass: to hold the soil." Adding in the Spanish he had learned in the Caribbean Isles, as if addressing Philip, "You see, Your Majesty, there is nothing to be alarmed about," rolling up his eyeballs with a comical innocence—

Still, though the colonists might be secondary, the civil laws were there to be obeyed. One afternoon in late winter, out with a foraging party a mile or so beyond the corral he had built for the cattle, he came upon the blacks singing unabashed among the stumps of the land they were clearing; some were piling brush into a blue billow of sweet-smelling smoke, some were skinning the wet logs with drawknives,—there looked like a dozen of them.

That evening he wrote headquarters again. Eight weeks had passed and he had heard nothing; he supposed Colonel Stephens might be absent on military business. The times were strained—

But here was another messenger with a letter pouch; maybe this was his answer. And he watched the man dismount before the crossed musket of the sentry at the gatehouse, watched both of them look up along the terreplein, the sentry pointing with an inclination of his helmet to where he was standing and calling a man to take the wet horse.

The letter wasn't from Savannah, though. It was from Saint Simons Island, and in the brick-red wax of the seal were the initials "J. O." He opened it there beside the six-pounder, the May sun on his neck, the resounding rhythm of the drum fading out of his consciousness.

To Lieutenant Henry Edward Augustus Kent:  
Sr.

Information has reached me of the imminent departure from Havana in Cuba of a Fleet of fifty-one Sail and seven thousand Men destined for St Augustine and thereafter beyond a doubt for the long-postponed conquest of the King's Colonies in North America—

The lieutenant could feel the faded band of British color in his cheeks deepening into crimson as he read.

These Forces will move against us at the earliest Moment that Weather and their state of Preparation permit. Before Relief can arrive from Britain the Matter will be over one way or t'other. You will proceed, therefore, by Water, with all expedition, to New Inverness, where you will place your Command under L<sup>t</sup> Mackay of the Highland Company stationed at that Post. He will move your combined Strengths with all Dispatch to St Simons Island and these Head-Quarters. I must inform you it is of the utmost urgency you reach this Island before the Month of June,

And remain, Sr.,  
Yrs &c.,  
Oglethorpe

He lifted his head, breathing a slow deep breath as if he were smelling a fresh forest wind, holding it in his lungs, his eyes kindling, a seeping tingle in his veins. He stared down the winding river without seeing it, his mind already half embarked, the dull past and present already closing, the scene about him already flooded in a new wholeness, complete now at last with beginning and end.— He signalled the sergeant major and waited for him with the letter in his hands clasped coolly at the back of his scarlet coat, the sentry at the gatehouse grounding his musket, grasping the shiny knot of the bell rope and giving it four evenly spaced disciplined jerks, the polished waves of sound pulsating over the square. “The platoon will sail in the garrison boats at sunrise,”—a little proud of his chillness, with his blood singing, punctiliousness his Book of Common Prayer, his anchor to the Empire—

The sky was still full of stars when the drum roared Assembly. A roll call while he waited in his quarters, a movement of arms that sounded like a quick crumpling of paper close to his ears, then a marching rhythm on the drum and he led them out in front of the militia company’s attempt to present arms,—like Christian and heathen.

When every man was in his place, all the gear tight under the brown tarpaulins, the two-pounder snug against its shield in the bow, he shook hands with Mr. Portwood, stepped into the sheets of the Number One boat and took the rudder. Half a dozen strong pulls that rocked him rhythmically backward, and they were into the jellied sweep of the current. From the middle of the river he looked back; the second boat was following in his trail and beyond it, in the first gray light, Fort Frederick had already shrunk to a toy.

Then he saw the doorway of O’Brien’s house and the figure of a woman standing on the steps, and there, beyond the sudden memory of her intent eyes and the tilt of her head and the swinging of her body against the light, was the question, lying over the settlement like a mist, of what had become of his report on the slaves. Had the threat of trouble in the south obscured the importance of civil law?—Or was there one law for one and another for another—

He turned about and faced down the broad plain between the forest walls, flat as a new floor, the cloudy sun over the highlands striking the water into a dark luster, the bronze crown and "G.R." on the muzzle of the howitzer pointing ahead, not to questions but to duty, to honor,—Or dive into the bottom of the deep And pluck up drowned honor by the locks—

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He got off the bus at the stop below the Arsenal and stood for an undecided moment gazing back down the slant of the hill and over the plain at the dim, blue highlands beyond the river. Then he turned about and walked with his longest strides straight to the drugstore, straight back along the tables and the wire chairs, past the rack of thumbed magazines.

"Telephone, George?" round-faced little Sam Voyles said to him from beneath the framed word, PRESCRIPTIONS, glancing up through enormous spectacles and waving at an instrument on the corner of his stand-up desk.

"Thanks, Doc, I'll use this one," casting his voice into a not-wishing-to-trouble-him tone but feeling certain his intentions were as obvious as his necktie.

He closed the door of the booth as tightly as possible and dialled her number, not bothering to wonder how he happened to remember a number he had probably never called more than twice in his life. He counted three rings then began telling himself he was too old to be taking a girl to a football game anyhow—*ring!*—a girl fifteen years younger than he—*ring!*—who would certainly have had the same thought—

She answered as he was giving up hope and in his confused relief he absurdly pretended not to recognize her voice,—the young and beautiful voice that he would have known through the darkest midnight. "May I speak to Mrs. Estes?"

"Which one, George?" a flat, matter-of-fact inquiry that brought him her smile as if in television.

"This one," he said, and went on to tell her there was a football game tonight; "I think you ought to see it."

"You do?"

"By all means."

"Well, of course if you think it's my duty—"

He waited a second after he had hung up to get the foolish grin off his face, then he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief and brusquely opened the booth. He tried to assume an expression of having attended to some negligible piece of teacher routine, though he thought the blitheness with which he waved at Sam must have seemed intoxicated.

As he passed the glass tobacco counter he stopped before the elderly Miss Mary in a flat-chested, chocolate-spotted white jacket that was practically a service star for the soda-jerker she was relieving. He asked for two packs of cigarettes and when she gave him two of his brand, pushed one back and changed it for Allen's, glancing up at Miss Mary's face; but she gave no indication of seeing through his transparency and he hurried away.

He knew enough about himself to know that his furtiveness about all this came from farther down inside him than merely the jejune fear that his heart was on his sleeve. It wasn't love that would make him ridiculous but a love that meant everything to one and to the other only a substitute for the contemporaries at the induction center and beyond,—for the young men left behind to whom a widow was neither a hostess who would ask them in nor a "date." The most he could hope for was a sort of temporary assignment until a young man her age dismissed him; "That's all, pop,"—as the soda-jerker who fitted the white jacket would relieve Miss Mary one day. Her friendliness grew only out of loneliness—

But what did he want? Certainly not love. And if friendliness was enough for her, surely it was for him. That was one of the beautiful things about getting old; you became a sort of "trusty" among sex's multitudinous chain gang, with special privileges for

long service. He wasn't going to fall in love,—with her there coolly looking at what had happened, sorry for him, powerless to help him, aghast that he should have misunderstood. With Miss Mary and the doc shaking their heads at professor, the smile not too sympathetic—

He turned off the sidewalk in front of "Mrs. D'Antel's." There would be a shake of Mrs. D'Antel's head too, and probably a peeling of the eye at professor's private entrance and a cocking of the ear for wall sounds, Mr. Meigs not having built for boarders. "The old Meigs place." With the line of boardinghouse rocking chairs behind the six double-story columns of the front porch no doubt having long since turned Mrs. Meigs over in her grave.

He walked down the incline of the cement driveway, passed one of the windows of his two-room basement apartment which cost him forty-five dollars a month and was probably better than he needed, certainly better than he could afford, budgeting your rent at a quarter, turned left and almost collided with a Negro man sitting on the single brick step to the balcony that led to his door at the back. The man was leaning his shoulders against the iron railing, his hat beside him on the floor, gazing off down the hill at George's peephole view of the Carolina highlands now all but erased in the twilight.

"Professor Cliatt," the Negro said in an interrogative tone, getting his hat and standing up.

"Good evening," George said to him with an inner frown at the possibility of a delay in Mrs. D'Antel's hot water pouring down his body and drawing the deep chill out of his feet from his hours in the damp fields.

He couldn't remember having seen the man before. He was neatly dressed in a roomy brown suit several shades darker than his skin, an old-fashioned stiff collar rising an inch or more out of his coat; his clothes were pressed and his black shoes were shined into an overglossiness that was somehow almost appealing. George's first thought was that he was a preacher, maybe canvassing the neighborhood for contributions to his church.

"I hope you'll pardon me for troubling you like this, Professor Cliatt," he said in a resounding voice, his pronunciation perhaps a little stilted. "I wanted to call you on the phone first but I didn't know the name of the lady where you lived. My name is Lang Chatham."

He wondered sometimes if they didn't invent names for themselves as he and the gang had done when they were boys,—Barney Oldfield and—

"Come in, Lang. It's getting sort of cool out here."

Lang hung his hat on the back of one of the porch chairs and followed him into the living room. George heard the bell at the Arsenal begin to strike seven as he switched on the lamp beside his desk; he had time enough, even allowing for the minutes it sometimes took to get the antique motor of his car started, but he had no more than enough,—not really enough to shave and dress in the rosy semidream of anticipation that he had looked forward to—

"Sit down, Lang. I'm going out in a little while but I've got a few minutes."

The Negro glanced at George's old leather armchair and moved on to the straight oak chair on which George hung his coat when he went to bed. "Professor Cliatt, I'm the manager of the Fredericksville branch of the Atlas-Prudential Insurance Company of Chicago."

George cast him an alarmed eye.

"I was born in Georgia, up here in Clarke County. I worked my way through Atlanta University. I am married and have three children, eleven, thirteen and fifteen." He sat forward on the edge of the chair with his forearm on his knee smiling at the heavy gold ring on his left hand: "I'm telling you all this so you won't misunderstand."

George nodded and went on to hang up his hat and stick in the closet. He heard the soft voice continuing as he scooped the three arrowheads out of his pocket and dropped them in a cigar box half full of others, "I'm a deacon in my church, the Thankful Baptist, and I'm president of our Young People's Bible Class. In fact, my

pastor was coming with me to see you this evening but he was called to a sickroom." He paused uncertainly for a moment, then put his head on one side and went on. "I know what I'm going to say, Professor Cliatt, is—distinctly unusual. But we figured, there are three of us—all responsible members of our Negro community, Columbus White, Furman Lee and myself—we figured we would just ask you. If you can't do it, for any reason at all,—well, all right, thank you, sir, and we don't bother you any more."

George told him he would be glad to help him any way he could.

"Yes, sir. I was sure you would. We keep up with the way things are in the white people's world," he smiled up out of a corner of his eyes as if not certain whether George would see the humor in this understatement of a great truth. "We know you're not only one of the best teachers in the white schools but you are—a gentleman of understanding to our race."

George folded his hands uncomfortably. He started to smile Thank you, but the Negro went on hastily. "I don't mean to keep you. I know you've got things you have to attend to. What we wanted to ask you was this: we don't feel our children are getting the best education we could buy for them."

George lifted his eyes to the man's pallid face.

"We've all made a little money and we've saved it, put it in the bank. We think just about the best thing we can buy with it is education for our children."

George opened his mouth with the temptation to say he was glad to see somebody with a respect for education, but Lang went on and he sat in silence, looking at the short hair coiled against the Negro's skull, thinning over the corners of his forehead.

"We believe in education. We're ready to make any sacrifice to send our children to college. Up North somewhere. But colored children going North from Southern schools,—well, they just haven't had the foundation, sir—"

"Same thing with white children."

"Yes, sir.—What we want, sir, is to know if you'd be willing to help us out. Maybe you can't do it—"

"What do you want me to do?" George said half-impatiently.

"Is there any way in the world, sir, you could take these six children of ours and tutor them,—night, Saturday, any time at all would suit your convenience? They'll come anywhere you say and they'll be there on the minute. And I give you my guarantee they'll get any lessons you tell them to get. You won't have to hammer anything into their heads; I guarantee to tend to all that." He seemed to sense some impalpable change that meant his words were futile. His voice became minutely dispirited. "Anything you felt was right for your time we would be proud to pay—"

It was a strange proposal. In fact he had to admit he could hardly believe his ears. Not so much on account of their attitude toward education; he had been hearing vague talk about that for several years. But that it meant enough to make them risk almost certain repulse and quite possibly being "put in their place"; he thought Mr. Crumbley, or Harry Hall, for that matter—

"Lang—"

"If you found the children just plain didn't have it in them to learn,—why, all right, sir, we give it up the minute you say so—"

He wished to heaven the man had gone to somebody else. Why put it up to him? Why couldn't he have put it up to somebody who could say No, and never think about it again?

"I can't do it, Lang. There's no way in the world I can do it." He looked at the Negro leaning forward on his knee in a sudden silence, opening and closing the fingers of his hand. "In the first place—"

"You don't have to explain, sir."

"In the first place, with teachers being called into the Army and taking war jobs, my schedule is so full I simply haven't the time. In the second, I am employed by the Board of Education and—"

"I understand, sir." He stood up with a slightly wan smile. "And I thank you very much." He moved toward the door. "I appreciate your courtesy in listening—"

"Now wait a minute. I want you to understand I sympathize with your position. I respect your attitude toward education. Edu-

cation may not be able to solve all our problems but I believe it's the best hope we have—”

Still beating round the bush. And he knew he would go on beating round the bush. He wasn't going to tell this man that doing what he proposed would hurt George Cliatt's standing in the schools, or anyway, would subject George Cliatt to criticism and, worse, frankly, to jokes and all sorts of misunderstandings—

He held out his hand and the Negro grasped it briefly with his eyes lowered. In a minute he was gone and George watched him walk past the side window, hat in hand, head bowed as he pushed up the slope.

He turned away from the window and pulled on some more lights. Wouldn't there have been a way if he had tried to find it? Wasn't the truth simply that he didn't want to? Perhaps not “simply,” because the reasons he had given were good ones, but—wasn't he tremendously glad to have had those reasons? It was like—

He blocked the thought for a second by taking one of the packs of cigarettes out of his pocket and peeling a hole in the top. It was like being rejected by the Army. If he had been honestly sorry, if he could have deceived himself into thinking he was honestly sorry, —then the Negro couldn't have left with him this additional feather-weight of shame.

Of course it was common sense to think first of his own career; but there were several millions of young men nowadays who couldn't think first of their careers. Who was he to be sitting there in safety weaving his career,—ashamed but not enough ashamed? How's your soul, Mr. Cliatt—

He struck a match so hard that a fleck of spark hit his forehead. He lit the cigarette and drew the smoke into his lungs.

At the second puff he began to be aware something was wrong. He snatched the cigarette out of his lips, frowned at it, held it under the lamp. It was the brand he had bought for Allen.

As he studied it for a moment, undecided whether to throw it in the fireplace or try smoking it, the buzzer over the inside door

which led upstairs began to whir in the signal that meant "telephone for you and you'd better come a-running before Mrs. D'Antel squawks, 'Not here!'" He put the cigarette back in his mouth and bounded to the door.

As soon as he spoke into the receiver a voice began, "George, the situation is this—"

"Hello, Mr. Dobit."

"I'm in town and my car seems to have developed a hernia. They can't fix it until tomorrow. So,—I want you to come out to our Hallowe'en dance at the school tonight and incidentally get me home, though 'incidentally' is perhaps not the right word—"

His first impulse, of course, was to say he couldn't do it. But the idea of confessing he was taking a girl to a football game stopped him long enough to set him wondering why he shouldn't take a girl to a dance too,—the exuberant tunes of other Hallowe'ens pouring down into his feet and Mr. Dobit breaking away down the middle aisle, his wiry legs in the tight black trousers that must have been made for him in 1910—

He told him he would do it with one provision. "Provided you first come to the football game with me—with us."

"To where, George?"

He told him again and Mr. Dobit said, "Lord, help my soul!". Then he said he would come out and talk to him about it; "I've got something I want to show you anyhow—"

He went back downstairs, half sorry the old man was going with them, half glad for the help it might give him in the first few minutes with her when he knew he would be tongue-tied and gawky, not knowing what the difference in their ages meant to her, much or little,—what he meant to her, little or nothing; by the time they got to the dance he would be completely at ease with her and happy, or so hopelessly enmeshed with the writhing coils of reticence—

He took off his clothes, hurried into the bathroom and started to shave. You look like a teacher, or rather you don't look like an electrician,—probably seeing, without knowing she was seeing, the

fact that he had read and thought and felt and responded in his life, a good deal of that somehow in his face, somehow in his thin cheeks, his wide mouth, mostly no doubt in his eyes; you could usually see the books in a man's eyes. His face certainly couldn't have looked young to her; maybe not old, not too old. Though God knew what women liked in a man's looks,—if they cared at all. Still she had seen him and appraised him, and it hadn't been too bad. Maybe you don't really look like a teacher. That was when she read the marks of the unpedagogical traits,—the traits that unable to bear any more "professor's" that day had said to Miss Saggus—

"Mr. Crumbley will see you now, Professor," the large Miss Saggus a sort of minotaur, with the head of a principal's secretary and the body of a mayor's sister-in-law. "A professor, Miss Saggus," pausing casually at Mr. Crumbley's doorknob, half over his shoulder as he went inside, "a professor is the piano player in a bawdy-house—"

That sort of thing didn't help a man become head of a department. And neither did conversations with principals in which you—

"For example," said Mr. Crumbley, pinching off his nose glasses and holding them out in front of him as if wondering if he might not read his thoughts better without them, "I believe you were talking to your class the other day about Cornwallis at Yorktown. I believe you ascribed the surrender to an accident. Did you say that without this accident there might today be no United States of America?"

He couldn't help laughing at this caricature of his little digression, wondering at the same time which one of his young darlings had put that on the grapevine. "I didn't go quite that far. I just suggested that except for the storm that blew in as the noble lord was escaping, catching him, you remember, with half his army across the river and half in Yorktown,—well, he might quite possibly have got it all out and joined Clinton in New York, leaving Washington sitting empty-handed on the peninsula—"

"I am sure General Washington had taken that possibility into account."

"But don't you think that storm deserves an 'assist'?"

"Such things, Mr. Cliatt,—" Dead serious.

"And that day when the Spaniards had Oglethorpe in full retreat and then decided to sit down and cook dinner—"

"Such things might be evidence of divine favor."

"Yes, sir, they might be."

Yes, sir, they might be.—He laid his spectacles tenderly on the window sill, folding the silver wires across the rimless lenses as you might tie up the legs of a turkey that you didn't mean to have run away. He turned on the shower and began to sing in a bathroom mumble that died away as he remembered Lang Chatham: Mr. Cliatt, I brought you a nice little piece of guilt to add to your collection; it only weighs a feather—

He sidled under the water with an intense physical pleasure from the heat of it, from the hours in the wet field, from Friday and sleeping late tomorrow, from her smooth-surfaced voice on the phone, from leaving Mr. Dobit at last and driving her home,—inviting her here? He could start a fire with the sweet-smelling lightwood chips; she would push off her shoes with her toes and lean her head against the back of the sofa, her hair the color of toasted pecans—

Of course he wouldn't do any such thing. A schoolteacher was not expected to love; the Board of Education didn't expect it; maybe he hardly expected it either. Marry; that was all right. But to love someone for the warm banishment of lonesomeness, for the miracle of strength it absorbed and gave, for the burst of sunlight through the time-mist, for the pure ecstasy of love,—that was undoubtedly a breach of the Rules and Regulations. They hired him to teach history but they meant only history of events, not history of the unchanging shape that was the core of events,—now one feature set off, now another, but always the same irresistible form that had created art in its image, music and poetry in its brief triumph and long darkness—

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ALLEN STARTED THE hot water plunging into the wide-brimmed tub,—still a luxurious sound, as it washed at the memory of showers in “tourist-cabins,” showers in trailer-camps, slippery showers, slat-bottomed showers with the hot water beginning to fade out, painted tubs in rooming houses, tubs on legs, chipped tubs, scratched tubs, tin tubs—and no tubs. With the motors always singing up there as if you were being followed by swarms of flies—

It was strange to be standing in Jeff's bathroom, in front of Jeff's mirror, combing her hair up from her ears, twisting a knot and pinning it out of the way before getting into Jeff's bathtub,—which he probably never used, with the man-sized shower built into the corner. A man's bathroom, or maybe a mother's idea of a man's bathroom, desecrated now with powder and stockings on a coat hanger and an M-1 popgun and an olive-green howitzer beside the toilet seat. You might make yourself attractive in this bathroom but you would certainly do it with your feet on the ground; which was all right with her. She liked to have her feet on the ground. Not that they had always been, perhaps; but they were now,—good straight feet, not too long, not too short—

She took a comb out of her mouth and let her fingers weave it with an expert jab into the ball of hair on top of her head. She looked better than she had looked two or three months ago. “Oh, Mr. Electrician!” Her appearance must have been enough to frighten him. Her face might not be actually pretty but it was pretty enough to put up a much more convincing imitation than it had that day,—if the moon was right. An imitation that wouldn't fool a woman, but would fool a man—any time.

Not that she wanted to fool him. Quite the contrary. Understanding; some communication across the interstellar spaces, she didn't hope for much any more; a few signals. Maybe there wouldn't even be that with this man; she couldn't tell. He had a nice sort of tentativeness about him,—“and get some supper after the game?”

She had gone back to the kitchen and drunk a glass of milk while Jeff finished his cream of wheat. "I'm not going to be here for supper," casually to the cook's broad back; "Yes'm." She probably should tell Mother Estes too, but that was harder. "It will give you so much more freedom," Mother Estes had said, hiring the nurse for her, insisting on it. But evidently not meaning more freedom to crawl out of the surprising little pigeonhole that had been waiting for her, a pigeonhole labelled "Private," "Untouchable," "Wraith that has had its day upon the earth and has passed on to return no more." Two weeks ago, "I'm going to the movies with George Cliatt, Mother Estes." "Oh," the expression in her eyes changing—

She untied her bathrobe, threw it back off her shoulders and stood there in front of the mirror gazing at her breasts and her strong body, all of it so intimately familiar to her, so completely unknown to everyone else under the sun. She wondered if she would ever want to get married again. Wasn't that, maybe, why she had come here? Not really why, perhaps, but part of why? She tossed the bathrobe on a chair. Not if marriage meant no more security than before, with the camps and the rented furniture and the landlords and the new friends flowing into your vision and out again forever like telephone poles past a train window—

She leaned over and stepped elastically into the tub, creeping down under the line of hot water inch by inch,—the soft Georgia water that was so easy to wash your hair in, soft like the air even in October.—Trying always to tell her he realized he was older than she. As if that had anything whatever to do with a hope that had come to her, truth to tell, like the plane in the pictures circling over the rubber life raft,—just as she had begun to wonder how much longer she could survive in this emergency role of widow-mother-daughter-in-law on the leaden sea of stranger in a small city. Of course they were really just "visiting"; she had insisted on that. But how long could they visit? Indefinitely, as far as Mr. and Mrs. Estes were concerned, as far as Jeff was concerned; but she was concerned too, and there were some little moments now and then—

She had wanted to bring him here, telling herself "Estes is a

Georgia name"; there would be people who "knew his father." She wanted him to have that; not worth much when you had it, perhaps, but worth a good deal when you hadn't. As if she had really had in the back of her mind an intention, an almost invisible hope, of living here? Bringing him up here?—Where else? Home? "Home to mother,"—to the green grazing lands and the cattle, retracing her footsteps back into the land of memories, of hopes that hadn't borne too many flowers—

In the next room she could hear the nurse getting Jeff ready for bed,—chatter back and forth, endless, effortless birdlike chatter, chirping. In a few minutes he would be lying rosy in the crib that had belonged to his father. And she—after a few hours—would be lying in the bed that had belonged to him. Maybe she was wrong to search for a way out of this soft desert. Maybe there was no way. This long-legged earnest man with the spectacles polished to the glittering cleanness of a Pennsylvania Dutch windowpane, not young any more, some gray in his sandy hair if you looked for it,—there was no reason to think he knew the way. And even if she should learn to know him better, which she might never do, and found he knew the way, should she go?—There were too many "if's."

She liked him; liked him maybe because he was not young, because he might be leaned on, because of his steady changeless world of books, of dullness even, after living for so long perpetually poised to move, perpetually poised for "orders,"—then, alone again at home with the baby, perpetually poised for the telegram—that one day had finally come. Liked him, maybe, because of this life now with someone else's parents, wanting her, but wanting, really, more than her, their grandchild, with everything their son had known and loved dear to them, everything associated with him, even her whom they had hardly known at all; a life marked by an emptiness that she could never have explained to them, could hardly explain to herself, but, perhaps, could to him and his gray eyes so subtly without preconceptions. Liked him, maybe, because of the pigeonhole into which they seemed to have politely invited her to lie and starve,

the town as well as Mr. and Mrs. Estes,—she who was no different in her mind and body for her experience, except in its having deepened her understanding of life, of love, prepared her to give and accept; who, after so many months of drouth when the well of love in her seemed to have dried, felt within her now perhaps a refilling of the well. It was not a faithlessness to Jeff; it was not a part of Jeff at all, but of her, the her which had existed before she knew Jeff and the her which had been born in the pain of the telegram. She wanted something more than she had, something secure, personal; being noble about it didn't interest her in the slightest. That there might be a sort of crude justice in pigeonholing her, that didn't interest her. "You have had your taste of life and love; you must move aside now, if you please, and make way for others who haven't." No, thank you. She might decline to taste again; she could do that, had done it. But she would decide each case on its own—demerits—

Jeff the impetuous. She had worked her way through three and a half years at Bryn Mawr,—three and three-quarter years: it was Easter. She hadn't minded working. She might have gone to the State University and not worked; "with five sisters, anything beyond State you manage for yourself," her father pronounced, kindly, probably rather hoping to keep his youngest at home. Yet reckoning without the built-up desire of his youngest to assert herself. And she had managed; two hours in the afternoons at the switchboard of the little radio station, earphones and textbooks, until she could hardly study without something on her ears. All the way through until the Easter holiday, three months before a hard-earned Bachelor of Arts. She met him on the train going home, a brown-eyed "flying cadet" on the way to Dayton, cap on the back of his head, self-confidence enough for three; there was something challenging about such impudence.

And she had never seen Philadelphia again. A college degree put up sad competition against this. She had cheerfully thrown it away for a flying field in Texas and air strips in Utah and points west, for great happiness of a kind, violent rocketlike happiness that

flickered one day, revived, and then in California seemed to burn out rather thoroughly, but revived again with the transports going under the bridge and heading for the vast Southwest. Back eastward with the baby in a shipment of "army wives," each a budding army widow,—many having flowered by now. And more flowers to come, vases and baskets and gardens of flowers.—Leaving her, maybe, with a taste for gentleness, for quiet, for a life rooted in something.

She thought she must have no patriotism, none at all. This war, it was just an appalling senseless brawl that had wrecked her life, her child's life,—a fire blown into a conflagration by misrepresentations and crimes and lies of every magnitude, little and great, from every land. "Help is on the way," said Washington to Corregidor; if not a lie, a most slippery and slimy truth. It had been on the way almost two years—

But she was through with all that now, through with the big things; it was the little things that mattered. A home for her child. And for herself too. Not a pleasant, comfortable house like this in which he could grow up with her and his grandparents, but a home of her own and his own,—with a man who would be a father to him and bring him up, father and son. In time her husband would outgrow the feeling of Jeff's not being his, if she worked to overcome that, to show him Jeff was theirs now, not hers. And they would have children of their own.—And she would have a husband to lie down beside.

She stood up in the tub and scrubbed her legs matter-of-factly with the blue washcloth,—the pink one was Jeff's, and wouldn't have been left on the side of the tub if nurses were mothers. Why didn't men use washcloths? You couldn't possibly get clean any other way. And how did they even attempt to wash without them. She would have to get married so someone could show Jeff how to bathe like a man—

She lay down again, rinsed herself off quickly, wrung out the washcloth and whipped out of the tub on to the bathmat in a thoughtless, flowing suppleness. When she had dried her face and

hands she pulled a cigarette out of a half-empty pack on the basin, lighted it eagerly and put it in a corner of her mouth to keep the smoke out of her eyes. Things were quieter in the other room now and she thought he must be in bed,—he, the tyrant, the dictator of her secondary thoughts. Of her primary, too, quite possibly—

Ten minutes later, seven twenty-five by her wristwatch, she stood before the bedroom mirror in a gray flannel suit tying the shrimp-colored bow of her blouse. The gold button-earrings? No.—Gray hat? No hat.—White cotton gloves, leather pocketbook—

“Good night, my darling. Quick to sleep. Grandmother is right downstairs—”

“What’s a football game?”

“I’ll tell you about it tomorrow.”

“Mama’s going with the lec—the lec—”

“Yes, darling. Mama’s going out with the electrician—”

Father Estes was sitting temporarily in his before-supper chair reading the afternoon paper. Mother Estes was balanced sideways on the sofa taking an embroidery hoop out of her sewing bag; she stopped and looked up at Allen in the living-room door. “Supper’s almost ready, dear.”

“Oh, didn’t I tell you?” knowing quite well she had avoided it until the last possible moment. “I told Jessie.—I’m going to the football game with George Cliatt.”

In the long silence she heard Father Estes turn the page of the paper.

“I won’t be late. We’ll get something to eat afterwards and—I’ll come on home,” smiling, with probably some desperation.

Mother Estes fingered intently in the bottom of the sewing bag.

Then Father Estes said, “I’ll bet you don’t even know who’s playing,” with a smile over the top of his reading glasses for which she could have kissed him. “Staug Hi,” he said, quoting the headline as the doorbell rang.

She went to the door herself.

“Ready?” he said.

“Come in a second.”

She took him to the door of the living room. "Mother Estes, this is Mr. Cliatt,—Father Estes."

She was glad he didn't simply bow to them. He made the room his own for a moment, striding in and shaking hands with both of them, smiling rather than being smiled at,—with his brown jacket and his new shave and his spectacles that always seemed so impossibly clean; talking to them a minute then getting out, the whole thing friendly and easy, with something about it, she told herself, a really young man wouldn't have given it,—her body somehow conscious that he liked the way she looked—



LIEUTENANT KENT LAY among the wet palmetto bushes, a submerged stratum of his thoughts wistfully on the shape of a leaf hanging in an opening of the vines before him which, from an angle against the ash-colored sky over the marsh, was the silhouette of the front of a woman's body, round, with the Flemish fullness of O'Brien's young wife against the light from the back door, or, for that matter, of a girl in Devon named Tira who laughed when he recited Shakespeare,—or the surgeon's wife looking at him yesterday from the door of the parsonage—

He turned his head slowly to the men on either side of him, the remnants of the fine July rain in pearls on the drooping points of the fronds, falling, in a hush of the wind, with a pensive sputter on the mat of dead leaves. He listened to the sound with a pride in them and in himself for the long months at God-forsaken Frederick when he had trained them to lie in the forest still as quail—

"We can lie here," he had said to Lieutenant Mackay, pointing his sword along the jungle growth; "let them pass and fall upon them from the rear." He would have described the retreat of their two platoons as "orderly," though when a loop of the sea-island vines knocked off his hat he hadn't stopped to pick it up; in fact he had hardly realized it was gone, what with the worry as to how

they might delay the pursuit long enough for the general to retire into the fort and dispose his meager forces,—both he and Mackay, retreating at a swift walk, on the watch for a place to make a stand, the insolent shouts of Don Antonio Barba and his men following after them on the sea wind, insolent with victory, and comic too. Some of the irrepressible Highlanders shouted back at them in a high-pitched imitation of their jabbering. When his platoon had come to a bend in the track that skirted a wide bay of the marsh along a wall of palms and palmettos, the stiff leaves clacking in the wind as he passed, he stopped beside the trampled sand, resting the point of his sword on the ground while the Highlanders came abreast of him: "We can lie here, Mackay—"

And now, in the almost impenetrable tangle, they lay looking out through the chattering screen at the trail in front of them not ten feet away and the stirring grass of the marsh and the smoke of the rain squall blowing in. He touched Sergeant Voyles beside him, nodded at the rain and made a motion of covering the flashpans; Voyles passed the sign along. At any rate the rain would feel cool; he could taste the salt in the sweat rolling down beneath the moustache that had grown out a little too pink for a proper grenadier—Our gayness and our gilt are all besmirched With rainy marching in the painful field—

He wondered, if he had thought longer about this plan, whether he would have proposed it: if an ambush fails, the trapper becomes the trapped. He and Mackay combined had about sixty men; they might fall upon Barba after he had passed, but if they failed to overcome him, whether because he was ready or because they would be outnumbered four or five to one, there would be very few of them to carry back the tale, and he as well as many another might lie there, friendless and forlorn, dying in a strange land—in strandes afar remote. Still, the barbarians must be delayed; otherwise the island was surely lost, and all their supplies and God knew how many of the regiment, and if the regiment was broken, what was there to save the colony,—the colonies—

He was hungry; that is, what he felt was more like hunger than

anything else, though not like garrison hunger. He hadn't eaten since daybreak except for the two stony biscuits each of them carried and he thought it must be about four o'clock. But he doubted if the Spaniards could have eaten either,—all morning the rise and fall of combat, in the clearings, in the tangles, along the track, then the runner from General Oglethorpe panting at him that the general was withdrawing to the fort, that the lieutenant would join Lieutenant Mackay and delay the pursuit, driving them back a little toward their landing place and disengaging. Barba might have fed his men in that blessed pause—

His eyes fell on the opening where the trail left the forest and he felt his lungs catch themselves in the midst of a breath, for a Spanish corporal and a private, both of them almost as black as one of O'Brien's slaves, were standing in the half-dark beside the trunk of a large liveoak tree, their long-barrelled muskets warily in their hands. They studied the bend of the trail for a moment, sweeping their jet eyes along the open crescent of the marsh, along the screen of the palmettos until they seemed to stare straight into his face. Then they said something to each other and the corporal beckoned behind them and came on.

The beat of a drum in a foreign rhythm grew louder and after an interval, as the two soldiers passed in front of him, the head of the main column strutted boldly into the curve, in step with the slow beat of the drum and the swinging pace of a bandy-legged sergeant, their muskets helter-skelter on their shoulders, high-spirited, jabbering among themselves, their gaudy regalia of brass and leather contemptible to him in its strangeness, in its garish arrogance.

He watched them, breathing through his mouth. There were more than he had believed possible: when the sergeant marched past him, so close he could almost have stretched out his fine sword and pricked him, the company was still emerging from beyond the liveoak. And if any one of them took it into his head to peer into the tangle that looked so impenetrable,—“Let them pass, let them pass,” he breathed to himself, a flurry of rain pattering on the palm leaves above him; wait until the drum became muffled in the jungle

ahead and the last man was in the cove, wait until they had marched on beyond the cove—

Then the head of the column reached the far side of the open space and he saw a polished officer flick a sun-browned hand at the drummer; the drummer rolled a sudden flourish and crossed his sticks. There was a shouted command and the company halted.

In the moment's silence, with his mind racing to orient itself to the nearly incredible sight before him, his muscles atremble for fear they had been discovered, or if not, that one of his men, or more likely one of the impatient Highlanders, would rustle the leaves or even recklessly fire his one precious round into the point-blank target, the man beside him moved and he froze him with a stare, grateful to God for the wind that must have covered the sound. He asked himself what it could mean, this halting there practically on their gun sights. He didn't know. But whatever it meant, wasn't this the moment, the never-returning instant, the time which taken at the flood—

Without daring to move his head he switched his eyes to the spot where he knew Mackay was hiding; whatever they did, the order must come from him. Mackay was staring at the spectacle as if turned to stone. He tried to signal him but Mackay's gaze was inflexible on the cove, and he felt the time slipping away—

Then he saw the leader, a dark-skinned young man with a narrow nose who must have been Barba, step a pace with his glittering boots into the soft marsh grass and shout another command. Half expecting the command to send them beating into the palmettos, Kent's incredulous eyes saw the column execute a parade movement and stack arms.

The men unslung their equipment and piled it neatly beside the gun racks, talk rising among them again. The drummer pulled off his curled hat and twisted himself out of the broad leather band of the drum belt, wiggling his shoulders in relief under the dark diagonal strip of sweat. Barba and two others, with the well-nourished complexions of officers' food, collected in a space at the far head of the column, unbuckled their brass helmets and wiped their faces,

Barba on a lace-ringed kerchief that fluttered thinly in the breeze like linen. Then he saw a corporal in front of him appear from somewhere with a small black kettle. Farther round the bend now he saw soldiers gathering twigs beside the trail and in a minute or two the tentative blue smoke of half a dozen young fires rose up from the sand and drifted to him with the clean sea smell of fires on the shore. The officers stood together while a sergeant on his knees before them fed some larger sticks tenderly into their fire.

His brain now seemed finally able to accept this unbelievable sight and he looked again at Mackay. Mackay, this time, was taking off his Highland bonnet and he knew he was getting ready, at last, to lift it on his broadsword in the signal they all understood. He could feel the stare of the men's eyes on his face— If we are marked to die—

Then almost before he knew what was happening, the cove brimmed over with the thunder of half a hundred muskets and the wild bellow of the Highlanders, and he found himself yelling with the rest and leaping pell-mell through the snapping vines and fronds, all his thoughts now focussed on one minute purpose, to slay the insolent foe.

He sprang into the road, nearly falling over the bodies of two of the Spaniards sprawling on the sand where they had been kneeling, recovered his balance and ran his slender sword between the shoulders of a man frantically trying to loosen his musket from the stack. He tugged the blade out, whirled round and swung it downward into the neck of a brown-eyed little man staring stupidly at him with his hands full of brushwood.

He looked about him through the turmoil for Barba and the two officers. He didn't know whether he could save them or not; all a gentleman could do was try. But he couldn't find them; half-consciously he noticed the drum on its side in the long grass with its head staved in, but the drummer was gone and the officers who had been standing near him. He saw one of the enemy lunging with a crazy panic out into the soft mud of the marsh and without a thought he seized a Spanish musket and fired into the man's back,

hearing now for the first time, as the mad confusion began to subside, the falsetto screech of the wounded. He noticed, as an isolated fact of no importance, that both his hands were sticky. A memory flashed through his mind of the somehow revolting frenzy on the faces of his jovial men—

Then his calmer eyes fell on the great liveoak tree and the desperately comic pantomime of a red-haired Highlander creeping cautiously round one side, his claymore in his fist, while a Spanish musketman put his Moorish head out from the other side searching in the opposite direction. He drew his dragoon pistol that hadn't yet been fired, cocked it and shot the Spaniard obliquely in the face.

Then, for no reason he could understand, he felt his knees becoming deliciously soft beneath him, felt the white sand of the track tilting up at a ridiculous angle then strike his cheek a bitter smothering blow. There seemed to be nothing to do about it, nothing he wanted to do,—except grope his way out of this sudden white bewilderment that seemed to be fading swiftly into red, as if a bright lantern were being shined hot against his skin. He rolled his head over on his ear, pivoting on his forehead which seemed to be held against the sharp sand by some invisible weight. But even with his mouth clear of the dirt, he couldn't breathe,—while the white sand in front of his eyes turned quickly crimson, drinking up the wine-colored pool pouring into it from—he couldn't say where—from far away, from strondes afar remote—from gentlemen in England now abed—from Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter, Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—darkness pressing about him—



SHE COULD FEEL the crowd beginning to press about them, carrying them along with it over the worn-down Bermuda grass toward the entrance gates. She was going to have to take somebody's arm in a minute to keep from being separated,—if neither of her escorts made the move first, which they seemed to have no intention of doing, one

because he had never thought of it and the other, she suspected, because he had thought of it too much—

"I took out my citizenship papers today, Miss Allen," said the wiry old man clad so unsportingly in a neat black suit and a carefully brushed derby hat, addressing her in the quaint old Southernism, but really meaning his words, of course, for George. "This is the only country in the world—"

"Now, listen," George said to him. "I'm taking you to a football game."

Out of sight beyond the wall of the brightly lit enclosure, an adolescent band struck shyly at the opening measures of a marching tune, gained courage and swung into full blare. George took out the tickets he had bought a few minutes before from one of his class ("You going to the game, P'fessor!" "Lord help me, but I am,"—pocketing the gray war-pennies that looked like dimes); she put her arm through his and he picked a way for them past the gate and into the cascade of misty light from the battery of brilliant moons ringing the field like satellites, remembering the forthright strength of his lean fingers when he had shaken hands with her for the first time that reminded her of crossing a mountain stream somewhere, somebody reaching back for her—

"There's your boss, George," said Mr. Dobit, raising his round, beautifully black hat in a gesture indefinably impertinent to a man and woman who returned to him the tepid smile reserved for those who can neither make nor mar. George bowed and the superintendent bowed, glancing beyond him at her and pausing,—while beside her, above her, across from her, modern Fredericksville fizzed with excitement. "I haven't been to anything like this in fifteen years," he said to her, back again to trying to tell her he realized he was older than she—

"I remarked, George," Mr. Dobit began.

"Come on." He led them on a climb nearly to the top of one of the tiers and they squeezed apologetically between knees and backs to an empty strip of weatherbeaten bench. She put her legs together and sat down, gazing about her at the crowd. All of them

seemed to have a delicate family resemblance to each other; maybe it was their manner, or their tone of voice; maybe it was their clothes,—the women dressed by the buyers in two or three shops and even their diversity having a certain sameness about it, and the men seeming to be dressed on the clothing-budget's leftovers but quite happy about it, as if sensing there was little to be gained from putting your best foot forward when everybody knew what your other foot looked like anyhow. An individual by the name of Fredericksville, not merely an American or merely a Southerner but an individual, standing there in 1943, as George might say, on what had happened to him in his childhood, what had gone before, brave and scared and stupid to his own peculiar degree, his massed desire to win pouring down into the field like the floodlights,—the individual who had pigeonholed her—

“Hey, P’fessor!”

She saw George wave back at a young man a few rows below them whose great white teeth were openly working at a handful of peanuts which he shelled and popped absent-mindedly into his mouth one at a time.

“Old pupil of mine,” he explained; “now risen, on my training, to be proprietor of the Mac and Jack filling station.—Allow me to buy you some peanuts.”

“I’d be charmed.”

“Peanuts used to be for baseball games in my time—”

“Who else do you know?”

“I know everybody. I don’t know *anybody* by sight, but I know what they talk about at the dinner table; I know what they read, what they listen to on the radio; I know if they are happily married. I am the invisible guest: I know the children.”

“George,” Mr. Dobit persisted, leaning across her. “My citizenship papers—”

“But if you asked Fredericksville who George Cliatt was they would say, ‘Who!’ with an exclamation mark. You feel like the ragged tutor in one of the old colonial academies.”

“I said, George,—”

"Yes. Your citizenship papers—your what?"

"Would you like to see them?" Mr. Dobit eagerly held out the lapel of his coat in his long white fingers and pulled a paper from the inside pocket. He unfolded it in silence and handed it to Allen. It was a certificate for five shares of preferred stock in the Piedmont Public Service Corporation. George frowned at the stiff paper then stared beyond her at the old man shaking in silent glee: "At last, George, I've earned a voice in running my country. I'm a citizen now. I've earned my vote. I now have a voice in electing my governor."

"You amaze me!"

"And my mayor."

She looked her question at him and he went on with pleasure. "Miss Allen, it's this way. I first choose my board of directors. Then my board chooses the president of my company. Then my president chooses my governor. We're a public service corporation and what greater public service could we render?"

"I brought you to a football game!"

"My friend, George, here," he said to her, "is not concerned with politics. He has forgotten his Demosthenes. 'There is one common safeguard in the nature of prudent men,' said the great orator, 'which is a good security for all but especially for democracies against despots. What do I mean? Mistrust.'—Very well, George. Now what is this exotic demonstration you have brought us to?"

On the field the band was making a gorgeous display in parade behind the plumed elegance of three "drum majorettes" uniformed briefly in the school colors. "Neither Solomon, George, nor the lilies was ever so arrayed. In fact, I don't doubt the old man, if he were with us here, would take one look at those young women and set machinery in motion to buy one,—or all, his wisdom not encompassing our folkways. Or would this be our Uchee war dance?" And then, after an involved ritual of marches and countermarches from which the three shapes emerged in triumph as if borne on a cloud of drums and brass, "No, rather, I believe, a song in praise of Ariadne," the voice trailing off sadly into nothing.

She had a good time. They laughed and sang and applauded with all the rest, jumped to their feet, sat down again amid the huge crumpling of a crowd seating itself. She enjoyed being a part of Fredericksville's will to win; childish it might be, but sharing it was, after a fashion, communication. She understood quite easily, in her pigeonhole, his feeling of living a different existence from Fredericksville. "In America the teachers live in the garret," he had said to her once; "it's bad for a civilization when the parents get separated too far from the teachers,"—though that entered the realm in which her interest faded out. Civilization! She had sacrificed once for civilization—

She leaned toward his ear. "Which is us and which is—"

"I say 'them'—Saturdays and Sundays.—I don't know yet."

When she felt a sudden relaxing in Fredericksville's nervous system she focussed her eyes in some alarm down into the field. The players were walking off and the dismayed suspicion crossed her mind the game was over; she didn't even know who had won. But after a minute she saw the people begin standing up here and there and talking to each other and she realized with relief it was only the interval of the halves.

Then an absurd, indelible little thing happened between them. She had opened her pocketbook and lifted out the pack of his kind of cigarettes she had been going to surprise him with; she took one, put it in her mouth and held out the pack to him, offhandedly. She saw he was offering cigarettes to her too, and offhandedly, but it was a long second before she saw they weren't his kind but hers. And they laughed together in exclamation, while she turned hastily away because of the inexplicable sting of tears in her eyes for his having been thinking of her in precisely the way she had been thinking of him, and for the self-pity of feeling this was the first spark of personal communication that had flashed across her dark in years, shaking the pack at him impatiently until he took one, digging with her other hand in the pocketbook for her handkerchief, the cigarette tense in the middle of her mouth. Then all right again and accepting a light, knowing he was watching the profile

of her nose which she was sure would be moving quite perceptibly down then up as she drew on the match, glad when Mr. Dobit spoke though she hardly heard what he was saying.

“George,” fumbling in his pocket for the stock certificate, “you don’t seem to appreciate the importance of this thing.”

“Have a cigarette,” he laughed.

“This is my franchise. This is the genuine article.” Mr. Dobit took a cigarette not too familiarly in his flat fingers and pointed it at him over her knees. “The other kind is just a plaything. This answers the intelligent man’s objection to one vote’s being considered as good as another. Which everybody knows is ridiculous; that’s saying one man’s as good a citizen as another; it’s practically telling me one man can take out my appendix as well as another. The beauty of this franchise is it has other requirements than merely being of a certain age, not a criminal and not demonstrably insane. This franchise requires a careful man, definitely inclined to sanity, who will work and save and finally buy it. And it’s valuable, not only as a right to participate in his government, but in actual money; he is paid to become a voter. But the most beautiful part of it—”

Somebody yelled, “Down in front!” and Fredericksville obediently began to sit down.

“The most beautiful part of it is that an industrious citizen can improve his franchise; it’s very American. A franchise that couldn’t be improved would be like the caste system of the Middle Ages. Our American way gives a man room to better himself, not just socially but politically too. Some day I hope to have, not five votes but—six—”

She saw two or three boys run along the front of the stands toward a corner of the field out of her view. A man without a hat ran across from the opposite side. Several men and women in front of her stood up again. She heard a jumble of sound begin to rise out of the crowd as different from what it had been during the game as two successive responses in a person’s eyes. Three people below her hopped up on the benches.

"Is this part of the game, George?" Mr. Dobit asked him.

She stood up now with all the rest but she couldn't see much. George asked a man below them what was happening but the man was too busy trying to discover for himself. All she could make out was the fringe of a little group stirring about in the corner, growing rapidly in size, pulling people out of the stands like a magnet. Somebody said, "It's a fight," and George mumbled at Mr. Dobit, "Could this be Bloody Marsh?" She put her hand on his arm and stood on her toes, her mouth open. An older man near them in a nice brown coat said, "Where's the police?" and in a minute others began repeating, "Where's the police?" and "Get the cops." The man in the brown coat was serious but most of the rest were laughing and craning their necks. She could see hats below her rotating up and down the field, "Where's the police?" coming through more insistently now.

Then the bareheaded young man who had said, "Hey, P'fessor!" looked round at the crowd and shouted, "There ain't any police!" Everybody laughed and she felt like laughing too; it reminded her of baseball games back home, somebody like that always talking and shouting things like Throw him out! and Kill the umpire!

Somebody else said, "Get the p'lice!" and this time the young man elaborated: "The police're all up on Kettle Creek fishing!"

It struck a responsive note. It was just the sort of humor that delighted them, contained just the right amount of familiar gossip, just the right amount of brassiness, the right degree of speaking-for-many. Fredericksville roared. Two or three people asked frantically what he had said and a middle-aged man in the row in front put his hand timidly beside his mouth and whispered with a covert chuckle, "He said they're all up on Kettle Creek."

She saw George looking at his young man with a tolerant grin. The boy's face was solemn to exaggeration; he was obviously enjoying his success to the utmost. She wondered if he wouldn't spontaneously try to prolong his moment, and sure enough he did. As soon as the laughter flattened out he shouted, "The whole city government's up there fishing." The response to this was consid-

erably weaker but the young man tried again: "That's where your new City Hall's going to be built."

Fredericksville, however, had by now more or less got hold of itself. There were furtive nudges. Two or three individuals glanced over their shoulders with grins poised, ready to take flight if grins were fleeing. Somebody at the top of the stands yelled, "Down in front!" And the grins vanished.

Evidently on the basis of this change in the wind, a woman got up and shook her finger at the young man. "You've got no right talking about the Home Folks Party like that."

"That's where you're wrong, lady," the young man said. "This is a free country and I've got all the right in the world. I don't like the way Doc Buden runs this town and I'll get up and say so if I please—"

"Sit down, Winn!" It seemed to be a friend of his, for the young man smiled up toward the voice and saluted good-naturedly.

"The Home Folks Party," the woman began.

But Winn interrupted her with a laugh as he was sitting down: "Lady, if you'll pardon me, I say to hell with the Home Folks Party."

His friend called at him again, "That's all, Winn!"

The team ran back on the field and Winn gave the woman a bow and sat down. Mr. Dobit chuckled, "Greatest country in the world"; the whistle blew and Fredericksville scampered back into the stands and returned to the game. After a while Allen glanced down at Winn who, obviously having forgiven and forgotten, was on his feet again enthusiastically helping an Academy end to catch a forward pass, enthusiastically disgusted when the ball bounded off the boy's fingers.

"George," said Mr. Dobit in the third quarter, "if I come to another football game I hope you'll have one policeman here to arrest me."

Mr. Dobit's flagging interest was evidently not flagging alone. More and more paper gliders floated down over their heads from the back row, more and more empty soft-drink bottles dropped

through the benches to the waiting tin undershed and rolled with a bouncing thunder down the slope. George told her apologetically they couldn't leave yet because it wouldn't be showing the proper spirit. "I'm having a wonderful time," she said.

He held up three fingers at the ragged boy with a wire basket of black bottles and in a minute Fredericksville solicitously passed three of them from hand to hand down the row and his three nickels from hand to hand back to the aisle. With the help of the drinks and, in the last quarter, another bag of peanuts, he managed to distract Mr. Dobit until the whistle blew in cold slicing finality and Fredericksville stood up as if with one great sigh of relief.

They sat there for a minute or two waiting for the crowd to thin out. "Still," said Mr. Dobit, "I'm glad I came. He couldn't have done that in a lot of places in this world today."

George looked at him: "Done what?" And she herself couldn't remember for a second what he was talking about.

"I'm glad to see a citizen get up on his feet and say his say. Bless the Lord the boy's not already halfway to jail. That was worth the ticket, George, and I appreciate your buying it for me."

"Now we can get round to something really in your line,—like *Possum Up the Gum Tree*."

"*Little Old Log Cabin*," Mr. Dobit corrected him.

She watched the moons being extinguished galaxy by galaxy until the big southern stars covered the sky with a warm glittering dust; she was going to get home a lot later than she had expected,—than Mother Estes expected—



THE GARRET WINDOW was full of the big southern stars and the moon seemed to him white with the desolate whiteness of moons before dawn. Sitting barefoot on the low wood rail of the cot, he could see the shape of the hickory box in the middle of the floor that contained all his possessions except what he had put in the saddlebags

the doctor had lent him. He could almost read his name in the moonlight on the lid, "John MacIntosh Bruce," with the rest, "To be left at Goodgion's Ordinary in Fredericksville," now painted out to read, "at Tondee's Tavern in Savannah,"—the sight of it all bringing back to him that humid Sunday morning nearly a year ago, walking with his father on the bluff at New Inverness, the old man in plaids dressed for church in his Highland habit, deciding to accept Mr. Weatherford's offer to come to Fredericksville. He had tutored other young gentlemen in the three years since his graduation at Nassau Hall; not as a calling, of course, but until he could fit himself for the examinations before the Presbytery. Mr. Weatherford's proposal had sounded agreeable enough: "To establish an Academy or Seminary of Learning for the education of our Youth at a Stipend of 12 pounds per Annum." True, he had expected something more than a simple log pen with a clapboard roof, a log chimney and a board over the doorway bearing the word, "Academy"; but he had not been altogether unhappy,—until now. It was not the leaving, but the manner of it, the indignity of it!

He pulled the white cotton stockings up his long shins and fastened the buckles of his breeches. When he had stuffed the rest of his belongings into the saddlebags he flung them over his shoulder, paused a moment to glance about the bare room that had been home, then took up his hat and blew out the candle. Mr. Weatherford would take care of his box, whether it pleased him much to do so or not, have it carried on a black shoulder down the slope of the riverbank to one of his "petty-augers," as he called them, delivering it one day in Savannah smelling of tobacco and tobacco-casks—

Outside in the soft sand of the Bay Street the night was warm but there was a fresh breeze blowing in from the southwest with the aromatic scent of the pine woods in it. He thought it must be after four, but hardly had he taken a dozen steps toward the doctor's when the sentry at the fort struck the bell four times, quickly, like a ship's bell,—like Frazier's hammer on his anvil as he had passed that way yesterday afternoon, without the slightest premonition it would be his last in Fredericksville—

When he had dismissed his eleven young ladies and young gentlemen—Weatherfords, Waltons, O'Briens, Telfairs—he had closed the shutters of the Academy against the purple threat of a dog-days thunderstorm and walked up the Bay Street: these were dog days for the world too, there was purple in the wind; he needed to talk to somebody. It was a simmer in the kettle, a rising of the river. There were troopships in Boston Harbor, the *Peggy Stewart* was on the bottom of Annapolis Bay, next month the first Continental Congress was meeting; there were two red coats now on the terreplein of Fort Frederick, two red coats at the gate; a second fort was building half a mile up the river on the edge of the settlement. A friend of his student days had sent him a copy of the letter of the Presbyterian ministers of Philadelphia calling for a "firm union"; "popery has been established in Quebec, why not in Philadelphia?" And in Georgia? The Reverend Paul Turquand, Dr. Percy, William Tennent,—"the time has come when silence in the pulpit would be misconstrued." "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The big words were gathering; the great phrases were beginning to flash. "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood—"

He had stopped under the walls of the King's fort where the Bay Street crossed the Lower Road and gazed down the slope at some of Mr. Weatherford's slaves loading one of the ten-ton periaguas as if nothing much had ever happened in the world or ever would,—the ferryman asleep in a patch of shade on the flatboat, the road on the far bank to Ninety-Six empty, and even this end of it running deserted past the churchyard cedars and Goodgion's and on to Savannah.

Then he heard the ringing of Frazier's anvil, almost as gregarious a sound to him as voices, and he followed the shrill note round the corner into the Broad Street. He recognized at once the doctor's sorrel mare standing with trained patience beneath the carved, faintly smiling horse's head, over the wide smoky cavern of Frazier's shop and forge. The doctor himself was sitting in the shade at the

door of the ordinary with a towel round his neck while Goodgion, evidently having shaved him, now trimmed the ends of his long hair. He wondered if he could ask Lewis, there before Goodgion, about the other delegates; they weren't sure of Goodgion. But he had to know; if no one else would go with the doctor he was going himself and there were preparations to be made; he could ride the doctor's other horse but he would have to ask Mr. Weatherford—for a week, sir, to Savannah, on business—

Goodgion saluted him offhandedly with the scissors and the doctor looked from under his shaggy eyebrows and held out a copy of the *Gazette*. "This has just come up from Savannah, John," somewhat too quietly.

"Read it again, Mr. Bruce," said Goodgion. "Dr. Lewis reads so fast it don't sink in.—Give it some periods and pauses."

He saw in the middle of the first sheet, floating there over the proclamation like the royal flag over the fort, the bold black pennant of "**God Save the King.**"

"What's this?"

"Oh, Frazier! Mr. Bruce's going to read it."

Skipping the first paragraph to the burden and reading, "Whereas I have received information—"

"Hold on, Mr. Bruce. That ain't how the doctor read it."

"All right. 'Georgia. By his Excellency Sir James Wright, Baronet, Captain General of his Majesty's Province of Georgia, Chancellor, Vice Admiral, and Ordinary of the same—'"

"Don't that make you stop and hear!"

"Whereas I have received information that on Wednesday the 27th day of July last past a number of persons, in consequence of a printed Bill or Summons issued and dispersed throughout the Province by certain Persons unknown, did unlawfully assemble together at the Watch House in the Town of Savannah under color or pretense of consulting together for the Redress of Grievances or imaginary Grievances, and that the Persons so assembled are, by a certain other Handbill, endeavoring to prevail on his Majesty's liege subjects to have another meeting on Wednesday the 10th

instant, which summonses and meetings must tend to raise fears and jealousies in the minds of all:

“In order, therefore, that his Majesty’s good Subjects may not be imposed upon by artful and designing Men, I do, by and with the advice of his Majesty’s honorable Council, issue this my Proclamation notifying that all such Assemblings and Meetings of the People are unconstitutional, illegal, and punishable by Law.”

Bruce stopped and glanced up at the doctor, but Lewis had his chin buried calmly in the folds of the towel awaiting Goodgion’s suspended scissors.

“And I do hereby require all his Majesty’s Subjects within this Province to pay due regard to this my Proclamation as they will answer the contrary.

“Given under my hand and the Great Seal of his Majesty’s said Province, in the Council Chamber at Savannah, the 3rd day of August in the 14th year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George III, in the year of our Lord 1774. James Wright. By his Excellency’s command, Thomas Moodie, Dep: Sec:—God Save the King.”

He held the paper before him in the heavy silence; after a while he repeated, half to himself, “Unconstitutional, illegal and punishable by law.”

Goodgion looked round his scissors at the doctor’s cheek. “That means you won’t be going, Doctor.”

Lewis smiled up obliquely at Bruce.

Frazier lifted his tongs with the shoe still pinched in the ends and wagged them at the doctor. “If you want another delegate from this parish, Doctor, I’ll shut these doors and fetch my hat.—Goodgion’ll go too, won’t you, Goodgion?”

Goodgion snapped the scissors half a dozen times in the air. “I keep the ordinary here; I’ve got to serve who comes. You and the doctor now,—bodies get sick, horses throw their shoes, your trade keeps right on whether you’re in favor or out—”

“Well, I don’t like what I hear’s going on and I don’t care who knows it.”

"I'm a peaceful man, Frazier. I keep the law and I worship God. I've enough to do minding my own business—"

Frazier interrupted him with a cavernous belch and plunged the shoe back into the coals, nudging with his foot the black boy at the bellows.

Lewis beckoned Bruce with a motion of his head and he went across the yard and sat down on the steps beside the chair. "Do you think Mr. Weatherford would go?" Bruce looked out at Goodgion's fat hen scratching in the white sand of the Broad Street. "You and I and Frazier, John, we're all right; we're the salt of the earth and the backbone of the Colonies and all that, but the more people we have like Ed Telfair and Weatherford,—let's you and I go talk to Mr. Weatherford."

He turned the gold band on his middle finger two or three times. He thought it would be a lot better if Mr. Telfair could talk to him, but of course Mr. Telfair was already in Savannah working on the resolutions.

"Soon as Goodgion plaits my hair let's—"

Sitting there in the door of the warm storehouse, breathing the damp shady smell of tobacco and pelts and oak staves, of a dozen brown sacks of coffee Mr. Weatherford had brought up on a return trip,—it was coffee now, no tea for breakfast any more—

"The trouble, Mr. Weatherford,—"

"I'll tell you, Lewis, what the trouble is," leaning on the arm of his cowhide rocker, fanning his pink forehead with an impatient roll of his large wrist. "The trouble is you want us to meddle in what doesn't concern us. Georgia's not Massachusetts. The home government's been good to us in Georgia. They're like my mother when she used to say, 'I've got to favor the baby.' When we've asked for something we've usually got it. We wanted slaves; all right, go ahead, bring in your blacks. We wanted rum; all right, bring in your rum. We didn't like stamps; all right, we'll repeal it.—But we went at the thing in a decent gentlemanly way. Those hoodlums up there rig themselves out like Indians and dump three hundred chests of tea in Boston Harbor. Three hundred chests of

tea! That tea was worth fifteen thousand pounds! Why,—why, suppose some of my petty-augers were boarded at Savannah and my casks of tobacco staved in and heaved to the fishes! Why!” He laid the fan on the table to draw a crumpled handkerchief across his face.

“We’re not asking Parliament for the right to destroy cargoes of tea,” the doctor smiled.

“In Charleston we unload the tea and store it in a warehouse. That’s the sort of thing I’m talking about; we’re different people down here. And the home government knows it. They didn’t blockade Charleston or Savannah, Lewis.”

“If they can blockade Boston they can blockade Savannah.”

“When they do, come back to see me.”

“It’s sometimes easier to prevent than cure,” said the doctor.

“Why in the name of goodness do you want to lend your hand to stirring up trouble with the mother country? ‘Independence!’ Independence from what, Lewis? Independence from the British Fleet, if you please?”

“We’re being exploited, Mr. Weatherford,” Bruce put in.

“What would stop the French from blockading Savannah, if it wasn’t for the British Fleet? Or the Spaniards,—or anybody—”

“We’ll build our own fleet,” said the doctor.

Weatherford slapped the fan down on the table. “Build it with what! You don’t build a fleet with tracts and pamphlets and Presbyterian sermons. You build it with taxes—”

“But our own taxes,” Bruce said. “Parliament’s got no right to tax us; they can only ask our assemblies to tax us.” Weatherford turned and stared at him as if he hadn’t seen him before. “We’re British subjects,” Bruce went on, “but we don’t have the rights of British subjects. They exploited Ireland and now they’re exploiting us; Ireland’s dying a martyr to the absolute control of Parliament—”

“Is this the sort of treason you teach our children!”

“John’s right, Mr. Weatherford.”

“It’s contrary to natural justice to take a man to Great Britain for his trial,” Bruce continued, but Mr. Weatherford brushed him aside.

"Do you propose a rebellion, Lewis, for little things like this! These are details; they can be righted if they're wrong. They're no reason to secede from one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen,—greatest for war and for preserving the peace too."

"Many persons of consequence think they're a very good reason," the doctor said coldly, getting to his feet. "John Houstoun's a responsible man; friend of yours. William Gibbons, Richard Howley—"

"Pettifogging attorneys!" said Mr. Weatherford. "Lawyers are always on the hunt for trouble."

"Joseph Clay's a merchant. So's Mr. Telfair—"

"I can name you five chief citizens for every one you name me."

The doctor glanced at Bruce and they moved into the broad door. "I gather, sir," he said with a smile, "you're not inclined to go with us."

"You're fanning a civil war. Come to your senses, man!—There are always discontented elements, Lewis; the great witless vulgar always think the only thing they have to do is change the form of government. You know better than that. What matters is the Empire; if we remain loyal no force on earth can challenge the English-speaking people. 'Freedom?' Freedom to build your own fleet, Lewis? Is that what you want? 'Independence' to defend yourself from the rest of the world as best you can? These are catchwords, Doctor, for the mob to snap at; they don't mean anything. For God's sake, Lewis, weigh some of these fine words!"

"My balances weigh them heavier than yours," said the doctor.

Mr. Weatherford rolled forward in the rocking chair. "I have no control over you, Lewis, but this young man here, if you insist on attending this meeting, sir,—why, take your miserable books and fescues with you—"

Passing the cedar trees in front of the moonlit church the damp green scent of the forest was swept aside by the heavier smell of a lightwood fire,—the smell of hearth and peace and evening to him, of New Inverness, the smell of returning home, the black drops of rosin bubbling with a flutter at the bottom of the splinters; and he

now with his box labeled and the saddlebags loaded, the die, for good or ill, already cast—

The doctor's door was open to the warm moonlight and a candle was burning on the table before the breakfast fire. "Good morning, ma'am," he said to Mrs. Lewis.

"The doctor's feeding the horses," not turning her head, her tone full of the weary solemnity of someone who has argued in vain. "Tell him the coffee's coming on the boil."

A coming on the boil, a simmer in the kettle, a rising of the river! Day was just beginning to break as they swung off the Broad Street into the Lower Road; five quick strokes on the bell at Fort Frederick swept past them like a flock of robins in March—



As HE SWUNG the car off Broad Street into McCall and rattled away through the mounting dinginess of the "colored section" finally out into the country freshness of the Lower Road, George was as conscious of the warm physical comfort of having her there beside him as of the gleam of the lamps moving ahead into the dark.

"The greatest nation in the world," he heard Mr. Dobit saying, somewhere out in the dimness beyond her suffusing presence. "That is my calm appraisal, as pure of patriotism as I can make it. If he had done that in Germany or Italy or Spain or Russia or—"

After a puzzled minute he remembered the little incident and it reminded him of Mr. Dobit's "citizenship papers" and he asked him how he had got to be such an enthusiastic capitalist,—not that he cared, but since he couldn't talk to her freely anyway the next best thing seemed to be to let the old man talk.

"That's how we got to be the greatest nation in the world, isn't it?"

"I don't know how we got to be the greatest nation in the world."

"Why, I'd be very glad to tell you, George."

"All right, Uncle Remus; how *did* Br'er Rabbit lose his tail—"

"Not 'lose' it, son! He's got the finest tail in all history."

She laughed in a cheerful burst that reassured him she wasn't bored; not yet, at any rate, though he thought Mr. Dobit seemed to take from it a new, and ominous, lease on his argument.

"Adding us up, faults and shortcomings and inconsistencies and everything, throwing in the fact we're not a democracy, didn't set out to be, and never will be, until you give every man as good a body and brain as the next, we're still, I honestly believe, the greatest country in the world. And how come? It's mighty important to know that, so we won't try to change the wrong things. Well, what are some of our unique characteristics?"

"After a hundred and fifty years," she laughed, "we've learned to make pennies that look like dimes."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Dobit; "the pennies look like the dimes. How do we tell the difference? Are we great because we have no aristocracy? Is that a penny or a dime? Great nations have usually meant great leaders, and the leaders have usually come from the aristocracy. It's all right with me to eliminate the aristocracy, so long as you make some other provision for growing leaders. Plato was as concerned about his leaders as we are about the common man—"

"West Point and Annapolis sound like Plato—"

"They're just for war, George. Peace is what matters. We've learned to train our war leaders but we turn the peace over to practically anybody who'll take it. We're the only country in history that's risen to prominence in world affairs with no provision for developing our leaders; but can we maintain our position without it? Can we, selecting our leaders on a basis of emotion, hold our own with nations selecting theirs on a basis of ability to lead? Maybe it's time we remembered that the human animal has been saved from extinction by his brain, not his emotions.—But anyhow, is this how we got to be the greatest country in the world? Could it be this huge army of ignorant and sly politicians that's made the country great? We know that each little cell of government is eaten

up with rust and rot; we know the people are stupid and gullible and selfish and totally devoid of foresight—”

“Wait a minute now.”

“I know, George; you ‘believe in the people.’”

“‘Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better hope in the world?’”

“I forget who said that but I notice he left himself a nice escape,—a nice rip cord. If you pull at that word ‘ultimate’ you’re out. Ultimate’s a long time off and I’m talking about today. This is a great country right now. I believe in the potentialities of the people too, but potentialities don’t make a country great—”

He listened with one ear while the old man rambled on. Old men and politics, young men and love. And he in between somewhere,—surprised at the easy amiability with which love rang his doorbell, assured of a welcome, never doubting it, hands in his pockets; and really only a stranger at best, a mere nodding acquaintance whom he hadn’t seen or given much thought to for years. Now strolling up with something of a waggish smile, ready, as the expression went, to take up where he had left off: “Hi, George!” A decent respect for age would have taught him to say, “How do you do, Mr. Cliatt?” “I’m pretty busy right now, son.” And yet what he felt most like saying was, “How you’ve changed since we last met!” Something in his face, in his bearing, that wasn’t there before,—some maturity, development, a little consideration for his host, maybe; not much, of course, but just a little—

“You tell the people not to vote for a certain judge; he got his nomination through a gangster. You go on the radio, you go to the newspapers. Citizens’ organizations tell ‘em; everybody tells ‘em. But election day comes round and the people elect him,—a quarter to a third of ‘em. Willkie goes before the people with reason and logic, as if he were asking a board of directors for a vote of confidence; they turn him out.—No, George, the truth is the people much prefer the old Hebrew system of boss rule they’ve been taught in Sunday School. You have a Head-man in charge of everything; and He has a whole flock of leg-men, or you might say, wing-men, who

go about the constituency dispensing little favors here and little favors there. Not dispensing justice; heaven forbid! What man would dare ask for justice? What we want is mercy, knowing our frailties. If you need something, go to the Boss; if you vote right, He'll fix it for you. That's the sort of government they're used to. This business of asking them to vote for a judge is as unnatural as asking them to pick out a good archangel. Heaven isn't run by a city manager—”

And even the old men outtalking themselves in a kind of love song from being in her presence,—skating backward, putting their feet on the handlebars!

“You don't think democracy was made in heaven?” a smile as clearly in her voice as if he had seen it.

“No, ma'am,” said the old man; “I imagine you'd find more real democracy in hell—”

“The ‘smoke-filled back room?’” George asked him and Mr. Dobit let out his infectious cackle.

“No, Miss Allen, unfashionable as it is to say so in this, quote, century of the common man, unquote,—uncomfortable as my lone head feels out in this gale of contrary opinion, the people are very ignorant and very childish. Maybe education will make them able to govern themselves sometime (on dark days I'm not at all sure, remembering the well-known principle of ‘the unteachable third’), but they aren't able to govern themselves yet.”

“Don't be silly; we govern ourselves—”

“Just a minute now, George. I'm coming to that.”

He saw the yellow lamp of a freight train moving toward the grade crossing ahead of them, pressed the accelerator to the floor in what he knew was a jejune show-offishness and shot across the tracks in the dim glow.

“You read wonderful things about the common man,” said Mr. Dobit, not turning a hair; “capital Common, capital Man. But they aren't written by the common man; the common man doesn't write any too well. They are written by sociologists and editors and journalists, all very uncommon men, not merely educated and intelli-

gent but likely to be intellectuals. And with headquarters in New York City. They know about as much about the common man as the president of Fredericksville's Junior League."

"What do *you*—"

"And I suspect they aren't half as interested in the common man as in creating a religious tenet for themselves to live by. And quite possibly a political tenet too."

"What do *you* know about the common man?"

"I'm not going by my opinion. There are people in the country who do know the common man, know all about him, how he lives, what he thinks, what pleases him and what scares him. And when you look at their opinion of the common man it is pretty disturbing,—their opinion as expressed, not by what they say but by what they do. According to their acts they don't think much of him. Now maybe they're wrong. The trouble is they've been very successful."

He was about to ask him Who? but decided it was useless; he was going to be told anyhow.

"One group, George, is the politicians. They know the common man. Lord knows I hate to think they do, but they wouldn't be in office if they didn't. They—"

He wondered if she was conscious of being pressed against him in the narrow seat. He could feel the warmth of her arm through his coat sleeve, of the side of her body,—a warmth that in itself meant nothing whatever, that depended for its life entirely on whether or not she was conscious of it. If she was, and he put his hand on the seat between them, she would lay her hand inside it; if she was not, his hand would lie there naked and ridiculous. She might even say, "Am I crowding you?" and edge away the fraction of an inch that would remove her from his world completely, and forever, telling him in the same instant it was only in his imagination a bridge existed across the gulf between them, or could exist.

"And the movie producers know the common man. They've bet millions of dollars he is about twelve years old. And they're winning, George. If only they weren't winning!"

"The radio stations are winning too," she said.

"Yes, ma'am, they're winning too.—Now don't pin a label on me. Labels mean nothing; substance is what matters. I'm not an 'ist.' I'm the principal of a county school, enjoying the luxury of a raised eyebrow largely through courtesy of the Teachers Tenure Act. I like the common man because I like children; I like horses and dogs and mules, especially mules. But I don't think they're fit to govern themselves. The common man doesn't even want to govern himself; it's abstract and bothersome. He accepts the idea of self-government as he accepts Christianity or fire insurance, without reading either the Bible or the small print in the policy—"

He put his hand over hers and it lay inert under his fingers. Then after a moment of breathless doubt during which his mind tried to tell him he didn't care, he didn't care, he felt her hand turn over until the palm was against his palm. And he tried to smile at himself disparagingly that something so trivial had come to mean so much.

"The sanction of the people," Mr. Dobit went on steadily to the headlights, "is easy to get if you know how. It's just a cumbersome formality we make the mountebanks go through with to achieve what they want,—and a dangerous one too. When you see Congress, less than four months before Pearl Harbor, trying to disband the Army and failing by one vote, all to please the people back home, who just don't understand the facts of international life; when you see us drafting our young scientists as riflemen and know that if we kept them at their studies the people would cry, 'Discrimination!'—well, you just say to yourself, how in the name of God has this country *survived* all these years, a lot less grown to be the greatest country in the world? Can it be that these henchmen of the political rings really have a hidden gift for governing? By their fruit shall ye know them, and the fruit has been the best in the world. Or does it mean that government just doesn't make any difference?—The answer, George, now listen carefully, is that these politicians don't amount to a hill of beans."

He paused and lifted his finger at the tall and willowy whistle of

the train reverberating up the long slope through the pines. "They don't run this country any more than that engineer over there runs the Georgia Railroad. This country is run by just the sort of people you would expect a great country to be run by. It is run by the most competent, the most able, the most experienced managers in their line it is possible to obtain."

"Well, I'm mighty glad to hear you think so!"

"I know it's treason to say all this in the century of the common man but it's up to people like Miss Allen and you and me to keep a weather eye open for phonies, and a notion can be a phony even when a whole generation accepts it. God be thanked for the little muscles that raise the eyebrow! God bless, George, the fishy eye, the dim view!—He's blowing now for the Clarke's Chapel Crossing."

He held her hand between them and they rode along listening, above the sound of the old car, to the whistle and the faint iron roll of the wheels as the train followed the old Cherokee Trail up the rising ground between the creeks.

"Maybe he sees one of Clarke's stragglers sitting on the rail," George said and Mr. Dobit said, "Maybe so."

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MAJOR BRUCE WALKED up the trail past the lines of men sitting in the hogweeds, old and young, bearded and beardless, their rubbed muskets and rifles between their knees. Over their careless talk he could hear the tired September breeze settling into the pines with the hollow wind note that was like the soft call of an owl.

As he reached the group of officers Colonel Clarke sat down on his heel in the sandy fork of the roads and spit his quid of tobacco into a gooseberry bush. "Gentlemen," he said, smoothing out a little drawing board in the sand and taking off the looped-up hat with the red cockade, "we fight and we get beat and—we fight again." He rinsed his mouth with a swig of water from his wooden cannikin and squirted it away in a hearty stream. "This is our plan," picking

up a black twig the fall winds had blown down and breaking it off into a quill.

"Here's your river." He wiggled a long line across the sand. "And down here's Fort Frederick." He drew a square beside the line. "Browne's holding the place with about five hundred and fifty men all told: two hundred and fifty Creeks, fifty Cherokees, two hundred and fifty white men, mostly Florida Rangers. We got four hundred and forty-three, counting you nine gentlemen and myself." He glanced up at them through the gray tangle of his eyebrows; "So you see we got plenty."

Carter said four hundred and forty-three was a gracious plenty.

"I'd hoped we could levy a thousand, but—we never did it."

"Don't need 'em, Colonel."

"No place to put 'em, Colonel."

Bruce sat down in the sand. It was strange how words could give you confidence, words that meant nothing, neither hay nor grass, just words—

"A half-mile up the riverbank they got a little outpost they call Fort Grierson. It don't amount to anything." He broke the twig again and leaned over his plat. "Now there's three roads to Fort Frederick. I call 'em roads; there ain't much road to 'em. We're on the Upper Road right where we are, running along here parallel to the river." He drew it in. "Over here's the Middle Road. And way down here's the Lower. Now we've got a crossroad, an old tobacco road, running from right here where we're sitting, that fork you see right over there, running clean across the Middle Road to the Lower Road; goes on down to the river way below the town, old wharf down there.—Now we're going to let fly upon this rascal from three sides: Colonel McCall and I, we're going down this old tobacco trace. I'll turn off at the Middle Road, Colonel; you want to go all the way down, if you please, sir, to the bottom one. You'll have a hundred and fifty men and at first day you move in. I'll have two hundred and I'll make the main attack from the middle; I'll start in at sunup and I'm figuring on getting there about five minutes after you—"

Bruce could feel his mind trying to wander; sometimes the old man explained a thing until your head felt like blowing up,—with the black twig reminding him of his fescue and his “miserable books” and the Academy, all dim behind six of the longest years—

“Now, Major, you want to clear the way for us.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I figure Colonel Browne’s heard about us raising this levy up in Long Cane, and I figure he’ll be looking for us to be just plumb fool enough to come at him from the Upper Road; I want you to make him think he’s right. At sunup, Major, you hit Weatherford’s old trading post,—right here. It’s a big white house on the other side of the road from the river—”

“I know it.”

“It’s the only house with any paint on it. You can’t miss it. It’s on a hill about a mile after you cross Rae’s Creek. I’d say it was a good two miles this side of Fort Frederick—”

“Yes, sir, I know it; I taught school—”

“You’ll have a little under a hundred men but you won’t have any trouble taking the house. He hasn’t got more’n twenty Rangers there and ten or fifteen Creeks. You hit the White House all of a sudden and you take it right off. The bigger rumpus you make, the better; I want you to draw Browne off from the fort—”

“I understand.”

“I figure, if you make a real to-do, he may send up as much as half the garrison. But before they get there you’ll have the house and you can hold ‘em off until we come. I’ll get there to help you the first minute I can.”

“Yes, sir.”

“It boils down to two things: take the White House, and take it as soon after sunup as you can. If everything goes right I look for Browne to move out to meet you by nine o’clock. By ten, God willing, Colonel McCall and I’ll be in gunshot of Frederick; with luck, I’ll have the place by midday.”

“I understand.”

“I don’t need to tell you all, gentlemen, what it means to take

Fort Frederick." Clarke studied the twig in his hand and Bruce knew he was thinking, and probably the rest of them, of Camden last month and Gates and his staff fleeing two hundred miles in three days. "These are dark days the Lord has sent us. With Fort Frederick in our hands again, we control the Savannah River, we cut off Cruger's post at Ninety-Six,—and we lift the hearts of our people with a much-needed success. For your men, who may have little understanding of these things, tell them they'll get fresh beef, new boots and clothing, supplies of all kinds. The Indian presents arrived there from England last week; they'll be divided out; every man'll get his share. They're worth four or five thousand pounds.—And tell 'em, if all goes well, when we have Fort Frederick they'll get two weeks to go home and see their folks."

He threw the twig away and straightened up on his knees, his big hands hanging beside him. He bowed his head and said a benediction, in an intimate and kindly way, as a man might whistle for his dog or take down his hat, the pigtail-queue sticking out over his blue collar like a finger. Then he stood up, brushed the dry sand off his pants and shook hands with Bruce and his two captains. "God bless you, Bruce. God bless you, Carter. God bless you, Willis," as if handing each of them his due ration of fresh powder—

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"I'M AFRAID OUR friend George, Miss Allen," said Mr. Dobit, "doesn't appreciate the beauty of the fishy eye. He doesn't believe in Justice Holmes's prescription of a weak solution of cynical-acid as a fine idea-cleaner. Of course, undiluted, it'll eat through anything—"

"What do you call 'weak'?" she said. "About half and half?"

"Oh, no. I mix it about five or six to one; and as a varnish-remover, I don't know anything to beat it. It brings out the fine natural grain of the wood. If you rub a little on our history you find some curious things. You find us going through many wars but always to defend ourselves against the barbarians. The barbarians

are always after us. It's curious to me they never once happen to be on our side.—And if you put a few drops on our secession from the Empire it begins to look like one of the great tragedies of history—”

“From the Union, you mean,” George corrected him somewhat wearily; the old man was not just in the way, but in the way so blithely.

“No, we didn't get away with that, God be praised. But we did get away with the other one. If we'd remained in the Empire there might never have been another great war. Maybe Napoleon, but hardly the 'War for Southern Independence'; certainly in 1914 the Kaiser would have known the coalition against him was too strong. Hitler would have known the same thing—”

“No United States of America?”

“It's better there's no 'Confederate States of America.'”

“Double treason!”

“Treason is a by-product of nationalism, George, and I don't believe in nationalism. If union was worth preserving in '61, why wasn't it worth preserving in '76? Of course that's a question for Northerners to answer; we in the South have been consistent enough. We didn't like union, 'period,' as my daughter says. I believe it was worth preserving both times. What went wrong was this (aside from a calamitous shortage of cynical-acid)—and it gets right round to what I've been trying to say: that is one of the very few times in history big business has lost a war. Sam Adams and Ben Franklin and Tom Paine beat the East India Company, and I'm not at all sure they didn't give world peace a setback of two hundred years.—It's pleasant to think, Whatever is, is right, but people being people and emotions being emotions, I'm inclined to say, Whatever is, is probably wrong. Or if not wrong, a long way short of right—”

Not to be able to talk to her was almost suffocating: what sort of things did she like? If they were things he knew, he would then begin to know her. He wondered if by any chance she liked Haydn, —grave, yet gay too, a warm earnest gaiety; but maybe she wasn't

that at all. If he knew three books she liked, only that, he might know whether it would ever be possible their thoughts and feelings would close together like their hands. That mattered to him. To love someone was not so rare; but to like someone too! He wondered if the power to like had not grown older in him than the power to love. He felt a little silly sitting there holding her hand like a schoolboy, when what he wanted to know was what her tastes were, in music, in poetry, in food,—holding her hand the meanwhile. He didn't know much beyond her taste in clothes; that pleased him, made him think everything might be well. Her tight-shaped tan shoes, almost unnoticeably square at the toe, touched a satisfaction in him as her hand and the muscles beneath the soft skin and the somehow practical and competent strength of it touched a response in him that was dalliance but more than dalliance too—

“I occasionally read on Sunday nights, Miss Allen, to George and a few others who need it almost as much as he does (including my wife, who is signally de-interested),—I believe it's this Sunday, George?”

“I guess it is,” he said, sorry at once for the lack of enthusiasm in his voice but knowing he would have to go whether he wanted to or not now, both because it was a regular quarterly ceremony he had been glad enough to attend in the past and because he wouldn't want them saying poor old George couldn't tear himself away—

“And incidentally, we'd be proud to have you with us, Miss Allen—”

She thanked him quickly with an odd solemnity, declining as if it were something far beyond the possible; George tried to tell her through their hands what a difference her being there would make, but she was unresponsive.

“Come if you can. I think I will read George Act Three of *Coriolanus*,—where he has to go before the people to beg their vote—”

“Let's back up a minute,” George said to him. “Who are all these honest, able, competent fellows you see running our country?”

"I didn't say 'honest.' They're not honest as you and I think of honest. I said able, competent and experienced. And I might add, duly elected in a democratic process and duly deposable. I mean of course, George, the directors of our big businesses."

"Why, they're guilty of as much shenanigans—"

"Not quite as much. Their company, you see, has to compete with other companies and they've got to show their voters some return on their investment, a dollars-and-cents return. The Corporation of Fredericksville, on the other hand, isn't in direct competition with Macon or Savannah; the directors aren't worried Macon'll take their market away from them. And citizens have no ready measuring-stick of earnings and dividend payments to show whether their company is doing right by them or not; about all they know is that it's an appalling-looking set of faces to find in the council chamber of a two million dollar business. No, it's inconceivable our politicians are responsible for this country's greatness; either government doesn't matter one way or the other, or these little creatures are not the government—"

He slowed down not to miss the crossroad,—"McCall's Corner," to the antiquarians.—She was of another generation, almost. He had heard they made less ado about love; no doubt none at all about holding your hand, prodigal of a touch not meant to quicken you into a sensitized wire. In a way he was glad the old man was there, slowing their steps; it was the passage that might renew his soul, not the arrival—

"Government's the administration of a nation's raw materials; if a country's poor in raw materials it had better see to it it has a good government, and even a good government can't make it great for long. If it's rich in raw materials it can run a long time on bad government and still be great; naturally it can't run as long as if it had good government but for a century or two you won't see much difference. We're rich in raw materials; we've still got practically everything. But we're coming to a time when we'd better have good government or, as you young people say, 'else.'"

"But you said these able and competent men—"

"They haven't given us good government but it's been better government than if the politicians had been in charge. The politicians argue and filibuster and swing this way and that, trying to respond to the emotions of the people, but the corporations, acting on the selfish intelligence of a few, give us not only electric light and washing machines but *Tristan* on Saturday afternoons and Beethoven on Sunday and any number of fabulous advances in human welfare that make the advances achieved by the politicians look like the play of backward children. Not out of any superior goodness of soul, mind you; just for the profit involved. But the result, for all its faults, is the envy of the world. I think it's very significant that of all the world's armies ours is probably the most homesick; the other young men may be interested in getting home too, but our young men, that's what they're fighting for: to get home. They like it here; it's better than any country they've seen—"

Better than the jungles of New Guinea. "We folded up our mortars and were waiting for the time to advance. . . . It reminded me of playing Indian" way back in Fredericksburg,—where his brother was holding a girl's hand that was different from all the girl's hands he had held, different in its response, in its message, which he couldn't quite decipher—

"And the American intellectual goes on being ashamed of our corporations, and I go on being half ashamed to talk this way.—This is how it works, George: you have two great branches of government, one made up of politicians, the other of businessmen. It's sort of like the House of Representatives and the Senate. The politicians are elected by universal suffrage; almost universal. Everybody has one vote of the same value as everybody else. Obviously the possibilities of who may be elected are staggering. But fortunately, the election procedure for the other branch is not so fundamentalist. The right to vote is not inherent. Many people have no vote at all, but many have; about twenty million, I understand, which is, incidentally, not far below the figure usually voting for the politicians. We (I may now say 'we') elect our directors, the directors elect our

president, and the presidents direct the administration of the nation's raw materials."

"I see."

"There are shenanigans, but by and large these presidents are the ablest and most competent men in the country. Most of the shenanigans come in when this branch of the government reaches out and lays a finger on the political branch—"

He let go her hand and swung the car sharp off the concrete of the Lower Road away from the river, the headlights beginning a winding climb up a low ridge of the sandhills, the motor starting to ping almost before he knew he was leaving the bottom. When he put his hand beside him her hand was gone.

"Well, it certainly doesn't sound like the country we thought we were building." He changed gears and roared up the rest of the slope in second speed.

"I don't know what we thought we were building," Mr. Dobit said. "Or if we thought very much about it. Running a backwoods plough was a lonesome business and here came a chance to go off with some of the boys and have some man-talk and get away for a while from the women and children—"

"And the first thing they knew, there was the United States of America?"

"Maybe I do them wrong, George. I'm just judging them by myself—"

He drew up in front of the lighted schoolhouse and they got out into the swift upland breeze pounding in the pines like surf on the shore. They walked up the brick steps, she on the other side of Mr. Dobit talking to him easily and inconsequently, apparently having forgotten George Cliatt completely, her hand hanging coolly beside her, unperturbed, composed.

At the top Mr. Dobit halted and faced about. They turned with him and gazed off beyond the worn sandy circle, beyond the old road, at the jewelled lights of Fredericksville, some gathered in a cluster by the river, some slanting in strings up into a spur of the sandhills.

Mr. Dobit swept a proud hand across the view. "Isn't that something to look at!—That brightest constellation you see there, the one along the horizon, that's my Piedmont Public Service Corp. 'Utility Major,' I call it."

He swung his finger back and forth along the dim line of the road that passed in front. "This is the old crossroad, Miss Allen, where Elijah Clarke—"

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BRUCE STOOD TO one side of the fork and watched them march away into the crossroad,—though "march" was hardly the word for it; out of step, muskets and rifles in every position imaginable, hanging in their fists, crooked in their elbows, trudging past in the hand-me-down uniforms General Gates had sent, soldiers in hardly any respect except that they all had guns of some kind, powder horns and shot pouches and flat wood canteens bobbing on their hips. And yet reassuring too, somehow, with their easy strides, woodsmen used to walking, waving good-by, laughing back and forth with the men left behind,—"a little under a hundred"; ninety-three to be exact—

He wondered if the sight of the main force leaving them didn't press down on their spirits as it did on his; a feeling of bleeding, of the strength seeping out of him, like that morning on Kettle Creek, a year and a half ago, lying in the canebrake with the ball in his shoulder. It was a small enough army before; now they looked like hardly a hatful.

He thought he would talk to them. He was not really one of them; he held his commission through Colonel Clarke, not through an election like Carter and Willis, but he thought he could understand their feelings as well as he had understood those of his "young ladies and young gentlemen" back in the old days,—before a decision by him might mean the difference to a man between his life and his death—

As soon as the last of McCall's men had turned off into the fork

he called them into a circle about him, sitting them down on the slick pine needles. "We're going to surprise them. They don't know we're here, and we're not going to tell 'em. The first they hear of us'll be when we let fly," talking to them easily, unpretentiously, in an elder-brother sort of way though three or four of them might have been his father.

He told them what the plan was, wondering while he was talking, how they were going to behave, though it would probably not be very different, one way or another, from other companies he had led. They knew what danger felt like, as any upcountry farmer did, but they didn't know discipline; like the others, they were self-reliant, not group-reliant. As with the others, he felt a curious bond between them and him. He thought they trusted him, trusted his decisions,—which, God help him, he sometimes hardly trusted himself; at first he had expected them to be suspicious of him, of the books behind him, but they seemed to respect it in a blind sort of way, smiling at it, as if it were a mysterious trick the major had that sometimes came in handy. He had dreamed sometimes, in his student days, of his church who would trust him and follow him, and now these ninety-odd, from the old men down through the two brothers named Glass who were fifteen and seventeen, were a little like a combination of such a church and his pupils at the Academy, and he thought he understood them quite well.

He was satisfied with their elections. For Carter, of course, he had a special fondness, from the long dim days in the cabin, from Granny Jenree, from Eli and the baby, from Thursa whom he tried to make his mind call Mrs. Carter, learning to call him Nollie before he had ever seen him,—a thick-chested, cheerful, red-headed farmer who had been with Howe at Savannah and had fallen back with the rest all the two hundred painful miles up into the hills and Kettle Creek. Jordan Willis was a lean, slow-thinking, careful man who had bred cattle on the northern grasslands of Carolina near the Cowpens. Neither of them seemed ever to have been afraid in his life, or thought of being afraid. Three of the sergeants they had elected had served with Lincoln; the most valuable one, he thought,

was a scrawny fellow named Sam Coffey from over in Carolina where his brother owned a grist mill, a thin-faced, strong-backed woodsman whose feet seemed as responsive in their delicate tread-ing through the underbrush as Mrs. Carter's hands at the spinning wheel; when Bruce had handed him the red stripe for his shoulder he had told him he was thirty-five—though he looked fifty, and moved like twenty—

"We are fighting for liberty. You and I are the people. We are the rightful source of all government. We are fighting for govern-ment by the consent of the governed, not by royal grace and favor." He caught himself as he saw an old farmer pick up a cluster of pine needles and begin pulling them apart. "The Indian presents were brought into Fort Frederick two weeks ago," he said, and felt their eyes lift up to his face; the old man stopped shredding the needles. "There'll be blankets and powder horns and muskets."

A boy named Burgamy from Wrightsboro said, "I want one of them red coats, Major."

"Every man'll get his share, according to his rank—"

"You'll get what's yours, bub!"

Somebody mumbled reverently, "A British blanket!" and they all laughed together. "Any rum down' yonder, Major?" Everybody laughed, as always, at the word "rum."—But he thought they had all forgotten some of their despondency, including himself. . . .

He was standing in the high weeds along the track watching as Carter and Willis formed them in a double line for marching when Coffey touched him on the arm and beckoned to him familiarly with an expressionless tilt of the chin. He followed him down the trail in silence, wondering a little, but thinking more about how close to the White House it would be safe to camp tonight and the task ahead of them, ahead of him, tomorrow.—A dozen paces be-yond the fork Coffey stopped and pointed indifferently along the edge of the grass with the muzzle of his rifle, saying nothing.

Bruce knew what it was almost before he could see them, knew with that sinking in his chest that told him he would never make a soldier. He had tried to teach himself to be always on the watch

for the unexpected but each time it happened there was a long moment in which he fumbled among the new alternatives—

"Not many," Coffey said in the tone he might have used in pointing at a covey of quail; "fifteen or twenty, I reckon. Creeks, more'n like,—coming in at the fork there."

Bruce bent over and studied the oval prints in the hard white sand. "Going in for the presents," he said, half to himself, while the sergeant pointed offhandedly at details that meant to him the tracks were fresh. "Maybe this morning, maybe an hour or two."

If he did nothing, let them go on in, they were reinforcements for Browne; they might even linger at the White House,—raising its strength to fifty-five or so, stretching out the time it would take to capture it, the time it would take to name his wounded and missing and dead—

But if he tried to overtake them and cut them off there would be firing, and the sound of firing might easily carry to the White House, arouse them like an alarm bell. The decision was his. Which would cost his ninety-odd more, strengthening the garrison or forfeiting surprise? Not courage now, but judgment. It was like feeling the weight of a burden Clarke had left for him to carry alone.

Beside one of the prints he saw a pear-shaped September leaf the color of a ripe persimmon, and he thought of an old blackgum tree by the Academy with purple leaves in the autumn, one purple for midday with the sun against them, another for late afternoon with the sun behind them, glowing like jewels—

"I'm inclined to avoid them; let 'em go on in." Coffey nodded, though Bruce wasn't sure whether it meant he agreed or merely understood. Anyway, the decision was made.

He sent Coffey and two men a hundred yards down the trail, waited until they got there, then gave the signal to march. He could have been on horseback like Clarke and McCall but he preferred to go on foot with the others, and as he walked he could feel the far-away chill of winter rising in the air as the sun went down, faraway but present, like the almost inaudible sound of wind or gunfire.

Now and then bright leaves came tumbling peacefully out of nowhere and, looking behind him once, he could see, high above the cluster of moving rifle barrels, the moving tufts of pine needles black against the late sky.

Shortly after sundown Coffey stopped in the road up ahead and waited for them, leaning his broad forearms on the muzzle of his gun. He told Bruce they were now just about three miles from Weatherford's. "There's a good campground a three-quarter mile farther on; a spring just off the track. But it's a favorite place with the tribes. You better let me go see."

Bruce told him they would sleep where they were and signalled the uneven lines behind him; he called Carter and Willis and gave the order to pitch camp: "No fires."

He lay down when the rest of them did, but he was almost immediately alone; almost at once their breathing changed, seemed to come laden from deep out of their caves of rest, leaving him with the occasional leafy stirrings of the pack-horses, the somber weariness of the pickets,—and the insects droning and singing about his face. Leaving him with a white house to be taken in the morning—

Where did the White House get its water? He remembered a small spring halfway down the hill in front of the porch on the edge of a mulberry grove. But there might be a well too; he had better count on there being a well. Still, well or no, they would want the spring. If he sent Willis with half of the ninety-odd to take the spring and threaten an attack from the front—he might so draw off their attention—that he and Carter and the rest—undiscovered on the forest side—might be upon them before they knew what had happened—might take them prisoner without—

He felt a hand shaking at his buttoned leggings and he whipped up off the pine straw and began beating about on the ground for the rifle he carried. It was deep night and the stars were shining through the ragged holes in the high foliage; there was no doubt in his mind whatever that they had been found, that the Creeks were about to fall upon them.

Then a voice grumbled in his ear, "Sun'll be up in an hour,

Major," and he relaxed. Everything was suddenly all right, and he grinned into the palms of his hands as he rubbed them over his forehead and his three-day beard,—grinned in relief, at the same time that he realized once again he hadn't always jumped in such quick alarm since he had been a soldier, that something had happened to him that morning in the canebrake when, five years without a scratch, the ball tore into his shoulder. It was as if it smashed not only his bones but his flowering delusion of immunity: he could be hurt, like any other. His bones had healed, but—

As he began to think again he sensed that the air under the pine trees was chilled; there was a film of September dew on the chest of his hunting shirt. For a moment he thought it was Sunday, then he remembered it had been Sunday at Kettle Creek; today was Friday. But he got up on his knees and prayed anyhow; whatever the day, it was the day of their trial, stretching out before him like a mountain to be climbed, banded with shadows and obscure intervening valleys, his path disappearing not far ahead into no one knew what, the whole of it darkened under the somehow impending clouds of mountain country,—like the country he and Clarke had crossed, leading the women and children away from the barbaric enemy into Tennessee—

He thought of Clarke stirring now too, getting up on the tough stilts of his old legs from a morning prayer for them all; and McCall far over on the Lower Road, moving about now, the cavalryman's bend in his knees—

"Take six men," he said to Coffey, "and go ahead to the spring. If anything's wrong send me back a runner. Don't shoot if there's any way to avoid it. If I don't hear from you I'll know it's all right. Wait at the spring. We'll follow you in twenty minutes."

He had the column form along the side of the road in the starlight, the old men coughing and spitting in the sand; he thought he could feel a tension among them, not like the bending but the stringing of a bow.. He had them call off their names, down the line. He told them they would have twenty minutes to eat and form

again; then they would move up to the spring where they would halt for a quarter-hour and fill the water bottles.

He sat down by himself on the pine needles and slowly ate a slice of cold pork and part of the hoecake he had cooked the day before, washing it down his resisting throat with water out of his cannikin, stale-tasting but cooled during the night until it felt good in his mouth. When they lined up again the starlight seemed to have grown brighter for he could almost see to the end of their front; but he knew it wasn't the stars. It was the reflected light of day-break.

He told them that from there on in there would be no more talking,—the schoolmaster again; back again in the Academy—

“We've got surprise, and surprise is a foot already in the door.”

It was during the second when he paused that he heard the gunshot; he stopped in the midst of a breath and he could almost sense the sudden suspension of breathing among the shadowy figures in front of him. The sound was far off, but he stood there motionless for a moment listening to it ring through the damp woods in a sort of long quick arc like a falling star. When it died away there was an instant of intense quiet in the column, then a rising murmur.

He didn't waste effort wondering what it could mean; there weren't many choices anyhow. He sent Willis and the leading squad up the road on the run, while he quickly checked the last details of getting under way and followed after him at a rapid walk, the lane growing clearer now almost at each step as the color began to flow back into the pallid sky like blood into a hand when a tourniquet is loosened.

He felt secure enough from ambush. The road here was practically level, leading across the uplands in a straight line except for the slight inexplicable bends of any animal-made trail. As the light strengthened there was good visibility into the pines on either side. He hurried on, his thoughts beyond the curves, beyond the shoulder of the long fall toward the spring. If there were no further firing maybe not too much harm had been done; the sentry at the White

House might possibly not have heard it, or not have guessed what it meant—

Then all of a sudden the shots began to come, and he felt as if a weapon had been snatched out of his hand, as if his rifle or his powder horn,—a dozen shots, falling on their ears like the great drops in the van of an August thunderstorm, three or four, then quiet, then a single one, then six or eight, then quiet.

He halted the column and sent forward the first man he saw, a corporal by the name of Guillebeau from the French settlement at New Bordeaux.

Then a figure appeared on the outside of the curve ahead and took his hand off his rifle long enough to wave them on, not watching them but intent on the slope down to the spring. When they reached the curve he halted the column again and talked to the man. Captain Willis had sent him back. Coffey had stumbled on the Creeks at the spring, maybe a dozen of them; the Indians had fired a few shots and fallen back toward the White House.

He looked at his watch, holding it there in his palm like an egg, asking the man further questions while he studied the fine steel hands, hoping he could disguise his disappointment and his uncertainty,—not with the intent of making them think he was a great commander but knowing the importance of preserving their belief in him. It was now five minutes to six. The officer at the White House was probably at that moment speeding a horseman out into the clay ruts of the road; a horse could cover the two miles to the fort in ten minutes. By six-fifteen, at the latest, Browne would know there was trouble on the Upper Road. Of course he wouldn't be able to know whether it was serious. Until he knew that, he would probably send only a few men. But he wouldn't send less than a platoon. And a platoon of reinforcements at the White House, added to the twelve or fifteen Creeks, would make its capture—"costly" was the impassive military word.

He knew his only chance now was to take the house before Browne could send the fresh platoon and he began to do some adding and subtracting. Give the platoon fifteen minutes to form and

get under way, which was generous, they could easily set out from Fort Frederick by six-thirty. The two miles they could easily march in forty-five minutes. By seven-fifteen, then, at the very latest, he must be in possession. Colonel Clarke wouldn't strike the fort for almost two hours after that; was it humanly possible to take the White House and hold it for two or three or even four hours?—with Browne probably sending up additional troops as he realized the urgency—

He slipped the watch back into its leather case and put it in his pocket. Holding the house came later. His task was to take it. And he had one hour and fifteen minutes at the most in which to do so.—He turned round to Carter and the men watching him and signalled them forward—



“FORWARD—AND—BACK!” called Mr. Dobit from between two snaggle-toothed pumpkin grins and a shock of fodder, laying the words out neatly on the pump of the tune, the flat prose of his voice cutting through the harsh but somehow merry squeaking of the pair of fiddles from Blythe and the whine of Bruceville’s first clarinetist. “Swing—partners!”

George swung her round, her cheeks flushed as if she had been walking in a cold rain, her mouth open in a smile he had never seen before, the walls of the little auditorium-gymnasium spinning past his eyes with the bright letters of Mr. Dobit’s posters: Give to the Red Cross; Buy War Bonds and Stamps; Quick Victory, Bring the Boys Home;—home from Italy and Africa and India, home from China and Alaska, home from New Guinea, from strondes afar remote,—a smile that leaped back over her sorrowful years to some other moment of exhilaration he knew nothing about, lost under the mist except for this brilliant little souvenir shining out of the past like a white bird-point in a furrow—

“Dosido with partners!” said Mr. Dobit, the disregarded long

black toe of his right shoe patting out the time like a child dancing behind its parent's back. "Dosido with corners!" Raising money for the war bond drive to bring the boys home, home to girls with white American teeth, the arc of their eyebrows raised in an American laugh, the floor of the school drumming in a measured clump-clump that swept the fiddles on before it with the gusto of running before a wind, down some sandy lane somewhere, leaves whirling, thunder beyond the pines—

"Get your feet back over there, P'fessor, where they b'long to be!"

"Hold 'em in the road, P'fessor!"

Grinning at them and their girls, Luther and Leroy and Sam--

"All balance and swing partners!" said Mr. Dobit—

Her smile not just for him; for Frazier and Floyd, for solid Horner, for Sam Coffey and his Sunday galluses,—burning of itself now, flickering down to hardly anything more than parted lips then fanning up on a gust of fiddle-squeals and a swing around,—her skirt hooped out then breaking back against her round legs—

"Right hand to partner!" And her hand was out and into his again, tight, elastic, not just for him. "And a grand right and left!" Her palm moist and somehow of a pattern with her smile, the sad years lifted out and tied with a ribbon, shed like the gray jacket of her suit, bridged with the spanning throb of a gay tune singing of lusty life and love, her breasts bouncing in a cadence slightly behind the beat of the music—

"Forward—and—back!" said Mr. Dobit under the flag that was flying tonight over splintered palms in the South Pacific—

"Swing partners!" And then as the clarinet completed a high somersault and dropped feet-first to a more pedestrian register, "All promenade!"

And standing there beside her, both of them out of breath, polishing his blurred glasses and not able to see her expression but seeing her looking at him and seeing the white of her smile and guessing she was thinking he looked different with his glasses off, but not considering much what she was thinking for being wrapped in a cloud of admiration for her and the flush in her cheeks and the

laugh playing about her bloodred lips,—for knowing he loved her, for wondering how the distance between them appeared to her—

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BRUCE WAS LYING on his elbows watching the side of the White House through the bloodred leaves of an elderberry bush when Willis, by then far round on the front toward the spring, opened with a good fire. A moment later the early sun broke over the ridge-pole into his eyes and he couldn't see well enough to know whether the return fire came mostly from within the house or from outside, though he thought he could distinguish a pale trace of smoke in the trees near the road that was too close to the house to be Willis and was probably the Creeks, who certainly wouldn't fight from inside the house if they could help it. He looked at his watch and it was twenty-three minutes before seven; he was on time so far. But the platoon from the fort was undoubtedly already in the Broad Street,—already passing Frazier's cold forge and Dr. Lewis's deserted cabin, fat Goodgion waving them an uncertain farewell and rounding up his chickens—

He beckoned to Carter to move on up, then crawled on his knees round the bush; in a break in the firing he could hear the men advancing behind him.

He could mark now where the woods ended. Beyond was a clearing of flat land about fifty paces wide, covered with the brown and broken stubs of a corn crop and a bivouac of yellow shocks. On the other side was a split-rail fence enclosing a pigsty; there was also a brick smokehouse, gray with an old whitewash, a new pine wagon shed built of puncheons, and a large square privy with a conical roof. He thought if he could gain the shelter of the out-buildings he would be about halfway to the house. But he knew he couldn't hope to cross the clearing unseen, even with Willis drawing all their fire to the river front as they had planned; there were side

windows facing him and he didn't doubt there was a musket behind each one—

"We're going forward at the same time," he said to Carter, as if he had some special information making it obvious this was the one and only thing to do. "You take the first section to that smoke-house. I'll take the rest with me to the back of the wagon shed." He looked at Carter's big face that wasn't cheerful any more but resolute still and confident. "When you get there leave one of your sergeants and half a dozen men to fire on the windows and cover us. I'll do the same and when I signal you we'll go in. With Willis threatening an attack from the front I believe we'll be enough to take it." He looked at his watch again and put it away quickly because his hand was shaking. "It's now twenty minutes before seven. With God's help, by seven o'clock—"

As he waited while Carter crawled off, his thoughts began to stray again and he wondered how much farther ahead of him was the turn toward courage. At all the other times, after a long uncertain agony, he had finally reached a point at which his fear became numb; it was not real courage, such as Carter's or Coffey's, but he could go on blindly from there, borne along on something almost indistinguishable from it. But where was that point this time? Certainly he hadn't reached it yet: the drums were rolling in Fort Frederick now; the detachment, strong or weak, was undoubtedly on the way; out on the Middle Road somewhere the old man was moving in, had been moving for half an hour; the time was here,—and his hand was shaking. He hadn't been under fire since Kettle Creek, since the ball that had shattered his sense of immunity; maybe it was that delusion that had fathered his makeshift bravery; maybe, without it—

His task was clear: take the house. Do that and he had done his duty, done everything he could do. There was no use in thinking and doubting and wondering; the mind he had cultivated seemed to be of no value at all now, seemed only an additional weight the others were free of,—a willful and irresponsible companion, taking him about and about, into the future, into the past, into hope, into

the fog of uncertainty, into simple fear with its thirst for air unquenchable no matter how deeply he breathed. Leading him a hundred times up to the slowly approaching moment when he would lift his theological hand in a grotesque parody of benediction and cast them all into the whirlpool, for what fantastic reason his thoughts now seemed unable to say: for liberty, for independence—In God's name, Lewis, weigh some of these fine words!—for revenge against being “our colonials,” for taking an ugly whitewashed house on the edge of a hill—

He glanced behind him, saw they were ready, and lifted his hand.

Looking neither right nor left, he ran over the crusted sand of the old furrows as fast as he could run, conscious almost without seeing them of another group of figures running too, twenty-five yards away, plunging, all of them, through the brown dry stalks in a ragged line, against and about the rustling dew-drenched shocks—

After a long time he dived into the shelter of the wagon shed, his lungs burning. He leaned one hand against the rough logs and looked back. Somebody panted cheerfully, “Major c'n move, can't he!” He grinned at them. “Anybody hurt?”

Most of them had made it. Perhaps all; he didn't stop to count. He picked out the six men nearest him and posted them at the ends of the shed and behind the fence rails. He assigned each one a window in the house. “Aim at the lower right-hand corner.” Then he looked for Carter and when he saw him watching from behind the smokehouse he lifted his hand again and said to the men about him, quite calm now, conscious with an inexpressible relief that somewhere among the shocks he had passed his moment into what served him for courage, “Come on, boys, we're going up.”

When he next looked at his watch he could hardly believe his eyes. Less than ten minutes had passed. To say it had seemed an hour didn't mean anything; it had seemed any length of time he chose to name, an hour, a week, a lifetime. His time-measuring mechanism had just ceased to function, or rather its messages had ceased to come through. But there the minutes lay behind him like

a net of fishes, leaping and twisting with perceptions that seemed to have attached themselves to him as he ran but also to be only now overtaking him—

Running over the pale grassless yard hard under his feet, jumping the beam of an old *shimplow* on its side under a mulberry tree, thinking if he could reach the bottom of the house he would have won because he would be out of range from the windows; then reaching the house beside a service porch at the same instant as Carter and beginning to tell him they would wait a minute now for the rest and seeing the naked brick-colored shoulders of an Indian kneeling in the sand under the house behind the rock base of a chimney and sliding a musket-stock under his chin, and hearing an explosion beside his ear as Carter fired, fired his one ball because there would be no reloading now, and the Creek drilled straight in the face by hammered death and suddenly the color of bright Georgia clay, and leaping with Carter up the springy wooden steps and ramming his rifle-butt through the door panel, wondering half-consciously where the rest of their men were besides the handful squatting at the chimney-base and by the rain barrel, then hearing the blow of the stone warclub that dropped Carter like a sack of meal and firing his own single shot into the sweating chest in front of him and wondering where the rest of the men were; then in an inexplicable moment of sudden quiet and peace, a boy named Yeldell from the Ninety-sixth District running up the steps and pulling him by the arm, shouting something about the red-coat men, "hundreds of 'em," and half their own lost between the smokehouse and the porch. And motioning to the boy to help him with Carter, dragging him along the floor, knowing he was dead but wanting not to leave him there to be fleeced and mangled, and then abandoning him and stumbling back across the yard from tree to tree, the smell of powder mixing with the sour odor of the pigs and the faint smell of blood on his hands, reaching the smokehouse miraculously unhurt and sinking to the ground with the roll of British drums rising from beyond the house and the bitter taste in his

throat of failure. He sat there propped against the whitewashed brick like a rag doll, drenched with sweat, half nauseated, his chest heaving, the rest of his mind catching up with him, asking over and over again, What had gone wrong? Then, as if opening his eyes into a morning of storm, his full consciousness waking into the turmoil of yells and firings and groans and, from far away, the merry piping of the fifes,—a rising into the daylight of knowing that another assault on the house was hopeless, that he must get together what was left and join Willis; perhaps, together, from the river quarter, they might still be strong enough—

There was a rail fence running along the back of the pigsty toward the privy with the conical roof where the clearing was narrower, and without another thought, he signalled the ragged group huddled behind the wagon shed and ordered the men about him to follow and set out crawling on his elbows behind the bottom rail through the suffocating moist stink. In one angle of the rails a sow was hung like a great foul bag with her forelegs caught in the fence, the side of her neck ripped open by a stray ball; he crawled fastidiously away from beneath the dripping blood, grateful beyond words for these few minutes in which the men in the house were apparently too disorganized to pursue them.

He formed the remnants of the platoon in the woods under a break of the hill. They were pretty badly shaken,—as he was himself, though he was trying with every trick he knew not to let it appear. He counted them with his eyes. Out of forty-four, there were twenty-eight, several with minor wounds. He counted again, conscious of Coffey, miraculously whole like himself, already bandaging them with a callous-fingered tenderness, the two rifles and a musket he had picked up lying beside him on the pine needles. Bruce sliced off a strip of tobacco from the damp twist in his pocket he had never been able to learn to enjoy and divided it among four with wounds, his heart and head still pounding,—pounding with his failure to accomplish the mission, with the knowledge that the whole expedition might fail now because he had failed, with the

bitter blackness of sixteen men lost in doing what he bid them,—of Nollie Carter dead,—of Thursa a widow—

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HE WATCHED ALLEN going off, country style, with Mrs. Dobit and the women to serve the "refreshments," going off among them with a special at-homeness, fluent as they in the language of spoons and curtains and children,—over them all a startling sort of relaxation not unlike the Academy team leaving the field after the last whistle. He was proud of her ease with them, proud of the genuine simplicity that seemed to shine forward out of a childhood probably not very different from theirs, proud, in some little historical pocket of his mind, that the wound had healed between Georgia and Ohio ("Great-grandfather Bohlender came from Austria just in time to fight through the Civil War. He was in the Sixty-first Ohio Volunteers." "My God, woman, the Sixty-first Ohio marched with Sherman to Savannah!")—proud, most of all, of himself for having brought her—

"What you were saying, George," said Mr. Dobit, pulling him away to a line of folding chairs along the wall, sitting down, and flinging one knee limply over the other, "I'm glad you didn't do it. I'm pretty sure they wouldn't have voted you any medal for it. I want to see you head of History at the University some day. In the long run everybody'll benefit more from that than if you had an argument with the Board over tutoring six colored children. Just go along; you're doing a good job. You've got your M.A.; get your Ph.D. Keep out of the Board's way—"

"How about yourself?"

"Stand up for your rights. Stand up for your principles. But don't go flying off on some tangent that'll bring you under criticism, even if the criticism is wrongheaded and stupid—"

"I'm sorry it had to come up," he said, adding with a smile, "if these things would just leave you alone."

"Oh, that's asking too much, far too much.—You know, I can tell by the look in my wife's eye that she's already got you married to Miss Allen and's now casting about for some good teaching job for your eldest child."

George stood up, blushing in spite of himself, and accepted a paper plate of ice cream and pound cake from Mrs. Dobit's chubby, tough little hands. "The icing's very thin, George, but—"

"Where'd you get the sugar to make icing?" Mr. Dobit asked her, examining the cake on the plate Allen had handed him.

"Well, honey, we're raising money for the war, aren't we?"

"Back the Attack with pound cake and icing—"

"Eat your supper.—Here are two chairs, darling," she said to Allen. Allen smiled at him as she followed Mrs. Dobit away.

"I don't say we've failed, George, because tomorrow's another day; but look at the fix we're in. The schools are in the hands of the politicians. How are you going to improve the schools until you improve politicians? And how are you going to improve politicians until you improve the schools? It's one of those dead-center sort of balances everything's always trying to get back into."

He wondered how he could escape from the old man without hurting his feelings.

"And the only way to break a balance," Mr. Dobit went on with a mouth half-full of cake, "is from the outside. If everybody gets back what he puts in, nothing's changed; you've got to find somebody willing to forfeit his due, to throw it back. That breaks the balance and starts the wheel turning again—with the momentum of everybody trying to get the extra share. Somewhere along the line there's got to be a self-sacrifice. It's like the old wheel on Coffey's grist mill; the only reason Mr. Coffey's wheel turns is the cups coming up haven't got any water in them.—If you had one well-educated, able, conscientious politician, completely indifferent as to what happened to him, the world would be a different place,—if he could get himself elected. Somebody, George, has always got to die on the cross."

"I thought you were just saying—"

"That's not the kind of cross I want you to die on.—And now it's late and I'm tired and I'm going home." He stood up. "I don't reckon you're coming out Sunday night," he said with a sort of glowering twinkle in his eye.

"Why not?" George asked him, annoyed at having his intentions read so accurately, at having them so neatly frustrated. "Have I missed a meeting in six years—"

"All right, George; all right."

"In seven years?" He couldn't help laughing at the old man's bewilderment. "I'll come and listen to *Coriolanus* though I think he was one of the most pluperfect stuffed shirts in all history."

Mr. Dobit shook his head sadly, took a step or two away and came back. "I know men and women, George, who are convinced if they take their questions to God in prayer they will be answered. I don't say that's not possible; I do say it has been beyond my personal experience. But I could believe that easier than I could believe I might expect any sort of right answer from the people."

"Of course you had a bad experience but—"

"Oh!" He dismissed it with a wave of his wrist.

"If you'd gone on the radio, gone to the newspapers, like 'Sicilius,' and really explained it to the people I believe you'd have got a right decision."

"Right for when, George?" the little man smiled. "A decision may be right for today and exactly wrong for tomorrow. And the people never think of tomorrow.—Look, George, don't you really think this glorification of the Common Man may be a political trick to flatter him out of his vote? If he is all we claim aren't we a little foolish to let our schools and universities go on trying to develop him into the Uncommon Man?—Come on, Mama."

They walked with them through the hall to the door of the school. On the top step he turned back to George and pulled him by the arm; he stretched up his neck and whispered, "I like your girl, George," took his wife's arm and was gone.

George felt like pinching him; not only was she not his "girl," a

ridiculous old expression anyhow, but if she hadn't been talking to Mrs. Dobit she might easily have heard him.

They stood there for a minute watching the two dim figures, slight and not so slight, walking out into the old crossroad through the starlight with the assurance of country people used to walking in the dark. When he glanced at her she was looking at him with a steady half-comic stare, her lips pressed together. "What did he say?"

"When?"

"Just as he left."

"He said he liked you."

"I didn't hear him use my name."

"Oh, he didn't. He—you heard what he said."

"What did he say?"

"He called you—my 'girl.' "

"Oh, he did!"

She laid the backs of her fingers on her hips, her mouth offended, her eyes brimming over with laughter. Then she dropped her hands and the laugh seemed to shift to her mouth and her eyes were suddenly pools that glinted in the light from the door. "Do you want me to be your 'girl'?"

"More than anything in my life."

She held out her hand to him, the fiddles inside drawing out their long, disheveled tuning notes like a woman combing her hair. Then the skin of her face was warm against his and the tense heat of her body, still flushed with the dancing, seemed to melt away his awareness of everything in the world but the pinpoint of that moment,—which itself suddenly vanished as she whispered in a rapid breath, "Cinderella's got to beat it" She turned her head away, freed herself from his arms and went hurriedly into the hall.

When she came back with her jacket and her pocketbook and they started home she seemed far away from him again. "Oh, it's wonderful to have your feet hurt again with dancing!" She pushed off one shoe after the other and groaned with pleasure. "Why don't you take off your shoes?"

"I want to talk to you."

"Can't you talk with your shoes off?"

"I'm serious."

"I don't want to be serious. Can't we talk—unserious?—They are nice. I like them. And what I know about you!"

He didn't say anything and she went on, "Mrs. Dobit told me Mr. Dobit said you had one terrible fault: you had never learned to say one thing and do another. I promised I would teach you. You've got to learn not only to say one thing and do another but at the same time to be completely unconscious that's what is happening—"

He listened to her with a smile at her pretense of wordliness, the lights flooding ahead of them on the round yellow "STOP" at the intersection of the crossroad and the highway into the city, the nerves of his lips still feeling the smooth press of the skin beside her mouth. He was happy in the memory of it in a miserly sort of way, eager to kiss her again and yet perhaps more eager to prolong the joy of it, to walk slowly through this latter spring, moment by moment, holding to each instant until he had used every shred of its happiness, remembering the approaching end that he seemed to hope he might avoid; maybe it was only his years that argued so convincingly against prodigality, but whatever it was, he knew now that she liked him and such a glowing moment was not one to be lived through in haste,—the whole thing slightly out of season perhaps, like this summer night at Hallowe'en, warm with the rain building up somewhere ahead, tomorrow, a few days, maybe a week or two, but coming—

"You're not listening to me."

"I'm thinking about you though.—In fact I wonder how I can ever think of anything else. Because there are other things that must be thought of too, you know. And yet the strange part of it is, thinking of you almost seems to make it easier to think of other things. It's as if in becoming aware of you I had become aware of everything else too."

"You don't know much about me. How do you know I'm not

bad?—Maybe you think I am.” She turned her eyes on him in a quiet smile; “Maybe you wish I were.”

He laughed. “I don’t think you are bad and I don’t wish you were anything but what you are.”

He came to the crest of the last ridge of sandhills. He pulled the car partly on to the grass beside the concrete, turned off the head-lamps and sat there beside her looking down on the plain and the lights of the city.

“What did he call it?” she said as if changing the subject.

“Utility Major.”

“He’s a nice old man.”

“I really know a lot about you though it’s hard to say how I learned it,—about what you really are. I’ve sort of unconsciously learned a tremendous lot of important things about you from the way you fold your hands, the way you say this and that, your manner toward me, your flannel suit, the seams of your gloves.”

She gazed ahead of her through the windshield and slowly pulled at the tips of the middle fingers of her gloves, one after the other, until her hand was free; then without looking at him she reached for his hand, almost sadly.

He saw the reflection of a car’s headlights coming from behind though he was hardly aware he saw it.

“Don’t think it’s just because I’ve been lonesome that I like you,” she said. “I doubt if your little pointers have told you I am very fastidious in my likes—”

“I knew that from the white of your gloves.” He smiled at her.

“You pay for being fastidious, pay in lonesomeness. But that’s not why.”

He leaned across her and put his arms round her shoulders, surprised somehow at their frailty, surprised also at a sort of resisting stiffness. He waited for a moment with his face close to hers watching her profile as she gazed ahead of her. Then she turned her eyes slightly away from him and murmured almost pathetically, “What do you want from me?”

The headlights from the car behind illumined her dark hair and

the side of her cheek. As it passed them an electric torch flashed from it across his steering wheel and into their faces. An instant, and it was extinguished and the car rolled on down the hill.

She had not moved. The expression on her face had not changed; but in her shoulders beneath his arm he felt a quick shudder.

He kissed her cheek, sat up, started the motor and pulled the car back on to the highway. At the bottom of the long straight slope that dipped away like a roller coaster they dived through a damp basin of chilled air; she moved across the seat close beside him and took his hand between both of hers in a kind of mute gratitude.

They rode in silence into town and out the broad street that stretched away barren and bare, plucked of all its parked cars. "You're not mad with me," she said. "Are you?"

He smiled into the windshield. "Of course I'm not mad with you.—When can I see you again? Sunday's a long time off."

She shook her head. "It won't be Sunday," she said quietly.

"Can't you go out there Sunday?"

"When I say Cinderella," she smiled, "I mean Cinderella.—Maybe Monday. I want to see you—"

"'Cinderella'?"

"Oh, it's nothing. I'll tell you sometime."

As soon as the car stopped she opened the door and slipped out, easing it closed behind her. She hurried along the grass beside the brick walk, tried the front door and finding it unlocked, turned to him quickly and almost before he knew what had happened she had kissed him lightly on the mouth and was gone.

He took the car out of speed and let it roll down the incline of Kent Street into Oglethorpe. Near the corner of Bruce the momentum died. He coasted to the curb under an old hackberry tree, opened the pocket in the instrument panel, took out a pipe and sat there filling it, slowly, in a semitrance, and fumbling back through the bright succession of moments, touching again every word, every indescribable tilt of her head, every intonation, every change of her mouth as she spoke or heard him speak, every move of her eyebrows—that lay across the base of her forehead, darker than her

hair, in a line nearly straight to the abrupt down curve at the ends, the whole of their length peculiarly expressive. Her face had a wonderful reality about it, responsive, active, as far removed from any passive prettiness as flesh from wax—

“What do you want from me?” As if asking him not to interrupt their lives with something cheap and yet afraid he might, afraid of a responsiveness in herself. What did he want? He supposed he didn’t know,—beyond knowing the thoughts he had had of her before were different now, her body animated and unique now under the reflection of her words, her wishes, her awareness; no longer merely an image engraved on his mind but a human being surrounded by its past and its present, balancing its happiness, as always, on an edge—

He realized now that, at some moment he couldn’t recall, his mind had reached the decision she was not beautiful but charming, and he wondered if the peculiar sense he had of friendliness, intimacy, was not traceable in some way he didn’t understand to the very margin by which she escaped being beautiful; it was a sense of pleasure, relief, as if beauty would have had an estranging effect, like a cloak, like a third person, like an irrelevant topic of talk. And back there at the same moment, whenever it was, he wondered if he hadn’t moved, for better or worse, out of doubt into hope—

He heard the brittle clicks of heavy shoes and lifted his eyes to watch a young soldier walk past him down the shadowy sidewalk, his trousers, coat and cap under the street lamp all 1943’s olive, his movements still somehow those of a civilian, quite literally “a young man in uniform,” as all this Army seemed to be,—moving on, next week, next month, to God knew where, to God knew what. And he sitting there, secure, counting his love—

We folded up our mortars—

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and started the engine—

T W O

*Fair and continued warm today and  
Tuesday; slightly warmer tonight . . .*

IT WAS NINE-TWENTY on a soft, warm, moist Monday morning when George switched off the motor at the grade crossing in the leafy outskirts of the city and sat back to wait for the freight to pass. He had often waited for it after a Sunday night with the Dobits, strictly speaking a little late to school though his first class was not until ten and an A-student would check the roll for him,—waited for it through the slack years of peace when business was bad and half a dozen cars made up the train, and through the last few years when the guns were thundering and the young men dug holes in the ground for the living as well as the dead and the loaded cars stretched away down the tracks as far as you could see, rocking now across the Middle Road with a slow heavy grace, the sound of the locomotive sinking into the long and level ribbon of wheel-tone that had become the whole of the audible world. As the tone of her, her skin color, her wine-colored voice, the faint clean scent of some rather offhand perfume combined with burnt tobacco, obscured for him the world of men and women and things, removing them toward the borders of his consciousness and leaving him in a sort of glowing half-death in the midst of which his life had begun to burn like a jewel,—like the pyramid of the colored sweetgum tree by the road, blue-violet, crimson, yellow, green, fading with a dewy shine from one hue into another, the thin clouds white-blue beyond

it,—and over it all the permeating reality of the smell of the locomotive's coal smoke—

Moving in a haze through a long Sunday evening of talk and talk he hardly seemed to be hearing,—Rutherford and his “real problem of the South now . . . either try to continue in an outmoded ‘superior-race’ culture that has produced much one-sided good but is now almost impossible to maintain . . . or accept the Negro and make a mongrel of the South like Latin America and the West Indies. Either we are left behind in the nineteenth century or we go off on a desolate trail of our own.”—Lucy Rutherford suffering cheerfully with a violent domestic rash of cooklessness and babies and markets. Harry Hall with his “God damn the South and our ingrained habit of having somebody else do it, from slaves hoeing the cotton fields to the Federal government pulling up the streetcar rails. God will provide, or Yankee capital, or maybe the PWA—” And Mr. Dabit with his, “My little sympathy for the masses is not from hostility but from skepticism about them. They are incurious.” And later the old man’s indefatigable voice telling them their minds were shaped in an American atmosphere of business that was “making instinctive petty crooks of us all. We boast of the ‘deal’ we pulled, of talking ourselves out of a summons, of knowing where to call to get the charges dropped. We admire the string-puller who can get football tickets when there aren’t any, Pullman berths, hotel rooms. The everyday man who buys in the market and pays his fines is looked down on as a sort of simple-minded peddler, living hand to mouth, hardly able to make both ends meet—” And *Coriolanus* with, “The fires i’ the lowest hell fold-in the people! . . . This double worship . . . where gentry, title, wisdom, cannot conclude but by the yea and no of general ignorance—” the old man reading it with a delighted smile at having *Coriolanus* on his side—

And he himself sitting there in a haze, half astounded at their interest in such things, at their being able to live in apparent happiness without thinking of her or having her think of them—

Tank cars like a string of little old-fashioned submarines; gondola cars heaped with tarry ridges of coal; three flat cars with the sheen-

less olive-colored guns, rubber-tired, one of the cars marked "Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey" like a soldier dreaming of home; box cars drafted from all over the nation, "Great Northern," "Southern Pacific," "Lehigh Valley," draftees, "selectees"—that almost ludicrous dash of sugar on the young men's pill—

He thought none of the many ages through which he had passed had been so able as this one to perceive her completely. Once she would have been for him only a synthesis of emotion, as once he had heard only one swelling tone in an orchestra or one mood in a piece of poetry; now he could hear at the same time the great tone and the parts of it, hear the song of the poem while perceiving the word-joints and the balance and touch of the vowels and consonants. Once he wouldn't have perceived the peculiar beauty of the dissonance-harmony of her real love for the child and the real laughter with which she danced, wouldn't have recognized in her the quiet intentions to make herself beautiful, bringing to him a beauty that seemed unpremeditated as a violinist can seem to play unpremeditatedly, wouldn't have found the intentions as appealing in a way as the beauty,—the whole of their knowing each other piquantly reversed, beginning at his awareness of her as a mother, himself excluded, and leading on after a while into a companionly calm among the three of them, and on into something between just him and her. She seemed to stand before him now in all the rich colors of emotion's spectrum, mother and wife and young woman, a richness that might have been unattractive to him once in his immaturity,—all of it epitomized in the one brief movement with which she had once leaned over the child with the neckline of her dress falling away in a dim nakedness from the point of her breast—

The morning filled abruptly with a cotton silence as the sound of rolling iron was whisked away in a final flutter of sleepy clicks, a trainman in a pinched-up, blue-striped cap saluting him from the rail of the caboose. He waved back out of the expansive friendliness of love.

· Beyond the polished rails he saw a blue bus getting stoutly under

way, its open windows lined with a set of passengers that seemed to him odd. It was not so much the details considered alone that seemed odd; not so much that every seat was taken or that there were no women among them or that all the bare heads were young or that the faces seemed expressionless of everything except a subtle anxiety or that they all gazed silently at him as they passed. But the sum of all that suddenly revealed to him what they were and he sat there with his finger on the starter button not knowing whether to wave or smile or look the other way, his thoughts among the warm shadows of a summer daybreak in Fredericksburg and Jit sauntering with the offhandedness of twenty-one across the open space and lining up against the blue metal of the bus, hatless, coatless, answering to his name and blowing the rest of his breath into the ashes of his cigarette, his face with the haunting resemblance to their father like a tune played over and over that you couldn't name, the whole scene haunted with the same sort of off-center resemblance to its forebears, governments once more having colossally blundered and reached for their young men,—the blue buses, month after month, creeping silently across Broad Street on the traffic light, out into the Middle Road and on to Camp Clarke. On to the suffering and the fortitude; "It is almost impossible to imagine"—the young chaplain, with the grave mouth, back from the high passes in the Apennines—"the intensity of the suffering and the prolonged fortitude and valor with which it is endured—"

He turned his eyes down as they went by and switched on the ignition.

Then he saw with a flurried panic among his eye muscles that the rusty little needle on the gasoline gauge was resting over the middle of "Empty." He switched the current off then on, but the needle didn't move and he sat there glaring at it, part of him wondering if there could be enough in the tank to get him to school, part considering that never before had he been so preoccupied as to run out of gas. Darling, if you ever doubt my love, remember this!—He pressed the starter and the welcome rattle of the old motor rose about him.

When he rolled up at last under the "MAC & JACK" he felt as if he had been balancing himself on a tightrope; he drew in a deep and exquisite breath and let it out in a gust.

"Hey there, P'fessor!" Jack Winn, in a pair of Monday-fresh khaki pants, stared up at him from his knees where he was helping his colored boy take a tire off the rim. "Why ain't you in school?"

George got out on the swept concrete as Winn wiped his hands on an old towel and came over to him. He took out his book of "A" tickets and counted the number he would have left if he used three now and got nine gallons, responsive to the vague superstition they would last longer if he used just one or two. He told him to put in six.

Winn unhooked the hose from the side of one of the bright-colored pumps. Watching the gasoline plunging down the pipe, he leaned his weight back on one leg and grinned up at George. "How you like the game, P'fessor?"

"Oh,—I had a good time," George smiled, partly at him, partly at such a fantastic understatement.

"See him drop that pass in the third quarter? Nobody in a thousand miles. Had it in his hand! Coach ought to snatched that guy off the field.—Check his oil there for me, Heavy." He nodded toward the hood where the colored boy, an angular young man as tall as one of the gas pumps and hardly as wide, was already fumbling with the fastenings. "When's the last game you went to, P'fessor?" he said, watching the gauge on the pump out of a corner of his eye and also watching George; he seemed to remember the answer but to be looking forward to hearing it again.

George obligingly told him it must have been ten years ago, and Winn laughed good-naturedly at the colored boy, shaking his head as at the amusing antics of a child. George put his foot on the running board and leaned his forearms against the door, wondering how he could turn the talk away from himself. "I heard you testing out your rights as a free American."

Winn smiled a little at the pump, pressing the trigger a few times until the gauge read precisely "6:00." "I figure it this way, P'fes-

sor," he said in a minute. "My greetings from the President are just about due and if I'm going off with my gun to carry free speech to the Chinks I might as well cut myself a slice of it right here." He hung the nozzle against the pump and capped the tank. "You know, it's a funny thing," he said, coming round beside George. "A man just called me on the phone in there. He said he was glad somebody would stand up like that and tell 'em. I said, 'Thanks, bud; what's your name?'—He hung up, P'fessor."

George shook his head sympathetically. "How much do I owe you?"

"I don't get it. What's going on round here when a guy tells you he's for you and then's scared to give you his name?"

"What's he scared of?"

"Oh, I reckon he figures a man's got his own rats to kill without going round looking for other people's.—Better lemme check those tires. They got to last you a long time, you know."

George glanced toward his front tire, then on beyond it at a pair of thick-soled shoes and a heavy-chested man in a bow tie. "I'll do it another day," he said; he handed the boy the gas coupons and reached in his pocket for some money. "How much do I—owe you?" pausing involuntarily in the middle as a second man appeared round the back of the car.

"Which one of you's Jack Winn?" said the man in the bow tie, a rectangle of striped shirt visible between his coat edges, the lower part filled out smooth over his belly.

"Talking," Winn said, putting the coupons in the pages of a greasy notebook. "That's one twenty-six, P'fessor."

He took out some bills, wondering what she would say if he asked the boy for a nickel in change and telephoned her—at twenty minutes to ten in the morning—for the purpose of telling her that he had been walking the lonesome sand of the desert for many hours now and he had to know when he was going to see her—

"Well, get your hat, son, you're going down to headquarters."

He heard the rising whine of a bus behind him going up the

slope in front of the White House. Then Winn said, "Says how, mister?"

The man in the bow tie took a detective's badge out of his coat pocket and showed it nesting in the big palm of his left hand. Winn looked at it then looked at the policeman's face. "What you mean, going down to headquarters?" a grin appearing, vanishing, appearing on his lips.

"That's what I mean, son. Now don't give me any trouble."

"What's all this about, anyhow?"

"You'll find out when we get there. Let's go." He took hold of the boy's arm.

"P'fessor, honest to God I don't know—"

He had stood there through it all with his hand in the inside pocket of his coat returning his gas-ration book. Something about this didn't seem quite regular; and yet he thought he had probably never in his life really seen anyone arrested before. He was not at all sure what the procedure was; there was a dim memory in the back of his mind of something about a warrant but—

"What are you arresting this man for? I know him—"

"Just mind your own affairs now, mister; this ain't any of your business."

"Don't you show a man a warrant when you arrest him?"

"I've got orders to pick up Jack Winn," the policeman said, raising his voice. "This man says he's Jack Winn. Now you keep out of it, cap, unless you want to interfere with an officer in the discharge of his duty.—Come on, bub."

Winn looked about him, wiping the perspiration off his face. "I haven't got anybody to leave with the station—"

"You don't want to resist arrest now, do you?"

"Well, my gosh,—can I just lock my cash drawer?"

"Take him in there and let him lock his cash drawer."

George stood there in a baffled confusion staring at the man's broad back while the second policeman went with Winn into the office. He knew the truth was he didn't have the slightest idea what the rights of a citizen were at a time like this. Maybe he was wrong

about the warrant. Certainly if a policeman caught a burglar he arrested him; he didn't have to go get a warrant. Wasn't there some phrase like "scene of the crime"? You didn't need a warrant at the scene of the crime; maybe that was it.—Well, this didn't look like the scene of a crime—

"Look here, officer, I'm a teacher out at the Academy—"

"Mister, I don't care who you are. If you got any complaints talk to the Desk. All right, bub. Just walk along between us quiet now and I won't have to put these rings on you."

Winn glanced at George with a confused little grin, gave his head a bewildered shake and walked off between them, their loose dark clothes lugubrious beside his khaki pants and shirt; he lifted his shoulders slightly as they reached the brick sidewalk, as if for appearances' sake in case they met somebody he knew. In a minute they had rounded the corner of the woodyard fence and were gone.

George leaned one hand on his front fender and stared at the spot where they had disappeared. His thoughts were spinning like leaves caught in a November twister; he didn't know what he was thinking. Someone he had been talking to quietly and peacefully a minute ago had been arrested; that was perfectly clear and simple. But why? And where was the warrant? And what did he do now? Or had it all been a mistake—

It was almost like being arrested himself, as if the policeman might just as easily have said, "Which one of you's George Cliatt?" and taken him. And he wouldn't have known what to do in that case any more than in this. Of course maybe there was nothing you could do; when you were arrested, you were arrested; you did what you were told to do. And yet a man had certain rights; he was as vague about what they were as what to do for someone hurt in an automobile accident, but certain rights there were. A man didn't have to live in perpetual fear of being grabbed by every policeman he met. There was something about a warrant; he didn't know what a warrant looked like or what it said or exactly what you did with it, but there was a warrant in it somewhere. You couldn't just walk up to a man standing on a corner and arrest him—

He wondered if something could have happened there at the filling station just before he drove up. He turned his head and gazed about him; the general appearance was of everything's having been stored away in its place on Saturday night and of only a little of it having been reached for this morning. The office door stood open as Winn had left it; the tire lay on the cement, half off the rim. Could he have stolen the tire? Stolen some money? He didn't really know Winn; the boy didn't have the look of someone who would steal but you couldn't tell much from a person's looks. Could he have been selling gas without ration tickets?

Of course there were any number of possible explanations. They might have been looking for another Jack Winn; it was not an uncommon name. There might be a good answer, even must be. Certainly it would be foolish for him to get mixed up in something he knew no more about than he knew about this. He had his own worries, his own life to live,—like the man who had hung up when Jack asked his name—

The colored boy could tell him whether there had been some trouble at the station before he got there.

He called, "Boy!" But the only answer was the sound of the traffic behind him mixed with a faint tune on the radio in the Canal Bridge Shoe Repair.

He went to the side of the building where there was a grease-rack. Nobody was there. As he looked about his eye fell on the clock on the office wall. It showed a minute or two before quarter to ten; he hadn't any time to lose.

He was standing there, not knowing quite what to do and feeling more than a little humiliated at his helplessness, at not having been able somehow to put out his hand and prevent the arrest, when he saw the top of a black head appearing slowly over the low wall behind the rack.

"Look here a minute, boy!" The head disappeared.

George walked across the greasy floor and leaned over the wall. The Negro was crouching behind it on his hands and knees. "Where's Mr. Mac?"

The boy stood up reluctantly and gazed about him. "He don't come on till one o'clock."

"Do you know his telephone number at home?"

"No, sir."

"What's Mr. Mac's last name?"

"Just Mr. Mac's all I know."

"Look here, has there been some sort of trouble round here this morning?"

The Negro shook his head ponderously from side to side. George turned away to the car. "Well, you stay right here until Mr. Mac comes, you understand?—What's your name?"

"They call me Heavy."

"Well, Heavy, you stay right here. Any cars come in, say there won't be anybody here until one o'clock—"

"Mister, what for they pick up Mr. Jack?"

George told him he didn't know. "I just know they didn't have a warrant—"

"Don't need no warren, mister. Wagon just drive up, get in, boy, le's go—"

"You tell Mr. Mac about it as soon as he comes in. He'll know what to do. Tell him I got six gallons of gas and I'll stop by and pay him today or tomorrow." He glanced again at the wall clock and hopped in his car; he thought he could just make it if he caught the green lights all the way.

He swung out into the street and round the corner as if he were in flight from the incident itself. He remembered Hall saying once, "My business is teaching and I'm going to mind my business,"—talking about something else, oh, about going down to register for some election. Teaching was his business too—

And yet wasn't there something about all this curiously like the—like the other times. You could usually match the pattern if you tried. Or even if you didn't try. Like the other times, but much more concentrated. He had a good excuse for not being in the Army; he had a good excuse for not tutoring the colored children,—not quite so good, perhaps, but good enough. He had a good ex-

cuse for doing nothing now; he was a teacher; it was not his affair.—Still, wasn't he, each time, looking for an excuse to do nothing? Wouldn't he have liked to refuse once more to act? There came a time in such things when a man would retreat no further, but didn't he want to deny if he possibly could that this was that time—

He slowed down for the red light at Jackson Street, looked right and left and drove through it. When he swung into the parking space at the school he was grateful for even the few impressions his mind had received since the incident; it had already been pushed slightly into the past. The shock of seeing someone he knew arrested seemed already to have begun to look like an everyday arrest. People were arrested all the time and he did nothing to help them; why should the accident of being present make any difference? It wasn't as if Winn were helpless; Winn was quite able to take care of himself. And Mac would help him. If the thing was justified, and it might be for all he knew, he would be wiser to have minded his own business. And if it was a false arrest, which was most unlikely, that was an offense against the people and the people would act—

He ran up the steps into the building as the bell began to ring. . . .

“How many of you ever heard of General James Jackson?” He said to them, taking off his glasses and polishing them with his fresh handkerchief while he caught his breath.

He saw a blurred forest of hands, breathed on the glass and went on without pausing as he knew he would have to: “I'm not talking about General Stonewall Jackson now,” watching the hands begin to go limp and subside. “I'm talking about the Jackson of our Jackson Street.”

They looked at him, eyes blank but not disinterested. “Jackson was United States Senator in 1795 when the State Assembly convened here in Fredericksburg and passed a bill selling Georgia's Western Lands to themselves at two cents an acre—”



WHEN THEY CHANGED horses at the Widow West's on the Ninety-Six Road General Jackson gave up his seat inside the post coach to an elderly man wearing his left arm in a soft leather sling and climbed up on the box. He took the gentleman to be an old soldier, with quite possibly a British ball in his forearm these fifteen years, and he was always pleased to do homage to a soldier; truth to tell, also, since he had been recognized at the Camden change the atmosphere inside had grown steadily chillier and he was glad of a good excuse to leave. Besides, there were questions he wanted to ask about Fredericksville which the driver could probably answer better than the passengers—

"Hold fast, sir!" the driver grunted heartily, heaving his broad bottom up to the box and lacing the reins about the oily grime of his stubby fingers. He signalled the black boy holding the restless chins of the fresh horses and glanced below: "Here we go, gentlemen!" General Jackson braced himself with his little Lucas stick and the coach swayed off with a flounder of hoofs and a dusty squeaking of its leather springs.

It was a fine April morning and he rode along on his high perch in silent well-being, gazing into the budding woods at the ghostly dogwood blossoms glittering white out of the deep shade and the wistful pink of the wild azaleas, appraising with a planter's eye the ox plows turning the damp fields,—and with a politician's hand, saluting the plowmen. He hadn't expected to see Southern woods and Southern earth again for many months—

And now some would say he was sacrificing his career for the honor of Georgia,—his friends, that is. The others, of course, would dismiss it all as a political trick. And it would be neither. Or maybe a little of both. Reflecting on it over the incessant somnolent jolting of the long journey down, out of winter into spring, out of bleak Pennsylvania into the blooming scents of his home country, he had pampered himself by nearly believing his friends would be right. But there was a strange exhilaration in his spirit; self-sacrifice was

likely to be depressing. No one seemed to realize that to seek was exciting, to achieve was dull.

He remembered it had been the same with the war. Honestly, he had rather enjoyed the whole thing. Of course he had been twenty-five, which was pleasant, and a commander, which was even pleasanter, but he thought a simple foot soldier, if he were perceptive, would soon recall the blankness of peace, the great dullness. That day, wandering among the jubilant citizens of Savannah while the last of the King's transports stood down the river toward Tybee Light, the sensation he felt was almost of suffocation; he only hoped he hadn't consented with too much alacrity to run for public office, —with old Judge Repp shuffling up beneath his law shingle with the short-barrelled pistol: "Here, my boy. If you're going to be for what's right you'll make your enemies, and a man's enemies are a lot more interested in him than his friends—"

"What are the good people of Fredericksville saying about this fraud?" his scalp tingling at the thought. "This unmitigated fraud," —platform words but out before he could catch them.

The driver leaned an ear closer to him. "Fraud, sir?" sighting down the dusty reins out of the corners of his eyes.

"This act of the Legislature selling thirty million acres of the people's lands."

"Seems I did hear something about that."

The general glared at him. "Do you mean the people are talking about anything else!"

"There's been a high water, you know, sir. Last trip I couldn't get into town at all, couldn't even reach the ferry. My passengers had to go across in bateaux. Mr. Hampton's bridge was damaged—"

"This thing'll cost the people dearer than twenty high waters."

"Seems I saw something in the *Gazette*; some of the Legislature gentlemen bought the lands—"

"The land companies bribed the Legislature, bribed the law-making body of the sovereign State of Georgia! Can you imagine!" He gazed off down the winding white road. "I myself, sitting in

the national Senate, was offered half a million acres if I would lend my name to the bill—”

“The gentleman’s a Senator!”

“I said, ‘If you pass this bill I will resign my seat in the Senate; I will return to Georgia and have that Act annulled or lose my life in the attempt.’”

The driver touched the rolled brim of his hat: “Service, Senator.”

“I’m ‘Senator’ no longer. I’m now a candidate for the Georgia House of Assembly,—the fellow seeing nothing but personalities: The gentleman’s a Senator; not We’ve been robbed!

But if the people were in a stupor that was nothing new to him. He had roused them before. He could still see the shivering and despondent faces of his soldiers glowering up at him, ready to abandon the siege and go home: “The miseries you have endured, the cruelties and insults inflicted on your families by this Browne and this Grierson your dispersion now will only renew.” Rising in his stirrups; “Vengeance is at last within your reach,”—feeling the embers of pride beginning to revive in them—

The few led the many, whether to battle or to the polls. “Republicanism” didn’t mean the people needed no leader; it meant they might choose him, as they chose their officers in the war. And if they chose badly?—for they had chosen this Legislature. And chosen so many bad officers he used to wonder sometimes if there should not be a national academy for training military leaders. Why not? Let them choose, but from among the trained; that was no reflection on their capacity to choose wisely.—Or was it? Did he honestly believe they could ever choose wisely, except by the merest chance? They based their choice on a man’s presence, his personality; if they liked him they elected him,—in a world alive with likable rogues. It was a little like getting married, or rather, like seduction; the politicians making love on bended knee with promises of gilded coaches and silver slippers, while Nell in perennial and perdurable innocence listened wide-eyed and at length lay down—

His wife was going to be terribly, terribly angry: “Think of my children, Mr. Jackson! First, their father forfeits a law practice

worth three thousand pounds a year, and now he forfeits the Senatorial toga!" Of course she wouldn't say "toga"; that was a platform word—

"You say you saw letters in the *Gazette* condemning this—dark and deliberate villainy?"

"Yes, sir; I read something."

"Signed 'Sicilius' perhaps."

"Seems I do remember the gentleman had a funny name—"

He could recall how the words looked at the end of his pen: The free citizens of this State are the source of sovereignty . . . no body of men can be entitled to any authority not expressly derived from that source . . . oppression and usurpation which it is the right and duty of the people to resist . . . what have we gained if we have merely exchanged British tyranny for American chicanery?—He would write more of them; flood the gazettes with them. The people were sovereign but somebody had to direct and settle their opinions, enlighten them as to the real points at issue. Without guidance the rabblement merely shouted,—shouted and clapped their chopped hands, and threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and uttered such a deal of stinking breath—

He remembered he had been reading *Julius Caesar* the day he declined the Assembly's appointment of him as governor,—but for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Nonsense. He didn't want it. To seek office was exciting, to hold it was dull; friends were friends, but an adversary was a gift of God—

"There we are, sir!" And he looked off beyond the curl of the whip at the valley and the broad river, still high, red-yellow, the color of a robin's breast, and the little village across it that was now the capital of Georgia, no longer under siege, its life no longer centered within the palisades of Fort Frederick but under the sedate new dome crowning the House of Assembly,—and the enemy at home in either.

When they lurched with a reeling tug of the traces up the ramps and on to the resounding flatboat, he sat there for a moment while the horses were being taken out, his eyes on the ruins of the old

fort, deserted now, fallen into decay, not even a flag flying over it, his mind going back to the siege and the Americans in the pines, prime for desertion but for his rising in his stirrups and his "Vengeance is now at last—." You had to talk to them,—as the black groom talked to the horses, slapping them on the neck, reassuring them, the vast mystery sweeping past under their nostrils. You had to understand them.

When the wheels were chocked and they were under way, straining out on the guide cable, the bow laid upstream beyond the steeple and the current pushing them across like a sailboat, he climbed down from the coach and walked to the railing and watched Mr. MacIntosh's great ebony Negro leaning on the rudder oar. "General," said MacIntosh's white ferryman, appearing beside him and producing a rusty salute; "I served with you, sir, at the siege of that old ruin yonder."

General Jackson held out his hand and felt his soft lawyer's palm gripped in a leathery fist. The ferryman lowered his voice until it was hardly audible above the slapping of the water: "I heard two gentlemen yesterday, as I walked home past Goodgion's long-room; they mentioned your name, General. They were gentlemen of the Legislature."

He nodded, folding his arms, not interrupting, though the ferryman paused and looked about him. "They were talking about your promise to come back here and repeal that law. Said 'twould be a plumb disgrace to the state to repeal it now, with the lands sold, the money for 'em in the Treasury—"

"Do you call two cents an acre 'money'?"

"You have enemies there, General,—high-placed enemies."

"I'm more interested in my low-placed friends.—Tell me, what are the people saying about this—this colossal fraud?"

"Well, sir," said the ferryman, spitting over the rail, "it's planting time, you know; a man's got his field to turn and—"

He knew. He understood all that. They had to be planted too, like their fields; you didn't look out upon a clearing one day and expect it to lift up the next morning into a crop of tobacco. "The

people," that great fallow field,—that mighty and absent-minded sovereign, helpless in peace as in war without guidance; that newly enthroned and naive monarch, created like the other one out of sentimentality, clay too in the hands of his Robespierres, his Mazarins, his Lord Norths,—his Jacksons. He could whisper in their ear; he could kindle a fire in their eyes, breathe upon their clay—their Caliban—when thou didst not, savage, Know thine own meaning, but wouldest gabble like A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes With words that made them known—

Why was he doing all this? If the people were content to have their Western Lands stolen, why should he care? The honor of Georgia? Politics? Or was it for adventure in a world grown dull, for the unparalleled adventure of merely being conscientious?—He brushed his hand lightly over the comfortable rigidity of the pistol barrel in the inside pocket of his coat—

When they clattered over the cobblestones to a ceremonial halt he saluted old Goodgion in the door with the knob of his little Lucas stick, descended and retired to the room he usually occupied; he stood for a while at the open window looking out on the ragged remains of the fort discarded now like an old coat the owner is done with,—Freedom's trundle bed, now outgrown—



ALL THROUGH THE warm, open-windowed morning, in and out of classrooms faintly scented with the familiar and not altogether disagreeable smell of pencils, pulpy old textbooks, varnish, chalk, boys-and-girls, up and down the worn hall—worn as somehow only the halls of public schools seemed to get worn, not so much dirty as dingy, beaten-down, a much-trod battlefield on which the resistance of the young to learning finally swept all before it and a superimposed ambition quit the conflict and took up its position behind the counter and the gasoline pump and the plow,—all through the warm morning he had an uncomfortable feeling of being watched.

It was as if, above and beyond the restless files of young torsos, there was another class, small, very quiet, disconcertingly attentive, observing critically what he did and didn't do, how he explained and reasoned, waiting for his conclusions and watching how he reached them; it was a little like those occasional visits from a committee of the School Board except for the nature of the questions, and their persistence. What are you going to do about it, Mr. Chiatt? Anything? Of course you don't have to do anything, you know; you have your personal affairs; that beautiful sensitized tension in you was not meant to be wasted on policemen and lawbreakers. What do you think will happen if you do nothing,—happen to you? Jack Winn's all right; as you say, he can take care of himself. This isn't on his doorstep; it's on yours,—just as that tutoring proposition was. And that other thing—

He heard his one-fifteen class pouring like a tidal bore up the channel of the hall, suddenly growing quiet as they saw him—or quieter—like someone entering a shadow; while they were getting their seats he strolled to the window and gazed out at the sooty flagpole and the city beyond it in the valley lying in the bright purity of the November sun. Then he walked to the desk, lifted the heavy watch out of his pocket and said flatly, "We're going to have a ten-minute study period followed by a written test," smiling at the mass disappointment, remembering the miniature panic such announcements had once stirred in his precariously informed brain. "I might suggest that you pay particular attention to the explorers and the early settlers, what they were looking for, what they found, what they did about it. Not that our little quiz will touch on that at all, of course,—though who can say?—All right. Ten minutes."

He wandered with elaborate innocence to the door, opened it, stood there in the hall for a moment listening behind him. It was like building a house of cards and taking your hands away—ever-so-gently—

The faculty room had the forlorn half-guilty look of being caught unawares; he entered, not on tiptoe but setting his black shoes down as carefully as he would set down one of his rarest "rocks." He had

two nickels. With one he might hear her voice, round, quiet but strangely full, filling the wires, close to his ear, a strangely stirring voice, smooth-surfaced, shining into these dingy brown walls—

“Mac and Jack, Mac talking.”

“Mac, this is George Cliatt. Did Jack get back all right?” half wondering why he hadn’t simply asked for Jack who was probably sitting on the soft-drink cooler by the door holding forth uninhibitedly on what he had said to the police sergeant—

“Not yet, Professor.”

George repeated “not yet” quietly, uselessly. He felt himself turning his head more directly toward the mouthpiece. “Well—er—what have you heard from him?”

“Not a thing.” Neither of them said anything for a moment, then Mac went on, “I’d go round there but I haven’t got anybody to leave with the station.”

George asked him, with a curious feeling of taking a step across a line, “Look, Mac, has he—has he been in any kind of trouble lately?”

“No, sir, not that I know of.—It’s beyond me. I reckon he’ll be back here any minute now—”

George told him he would call him again when he got out of school at two and they hung up.

He leaned there on his elbow, holding to the bottom of the receiver as it dangled from the hook, frowning at the black funnel of the mouthpiece. It had been three—nearly four hours; if it was a mistaken-identity case the boy would probably have been free before now. Suppose it was something else. After all, Winn might be connected with all kinds of shady deals; common sense alone would tell you to take a good look at this thing before you rushed in to—

He returned with long strides down the hall, a remote corner of his mind wondering if his house of cards was still standing,—the silent hall, silent as a house is silent under the even purring of the electric stoker—slowly feeding in little grains of pulverized learning—

He felt like a child caught red-handed when his eye fell on Mr.

Crumbley standing quizzically in the classroom door looking up and down the corridor with a sort of suspended accusation. He thought of coming right out and saying he had had to make a telephone call; then he wondered if he hadn't better put it on the more unanswerable basis of the lavatory. Then he changed his mind, gave Mr. Crumbley a grateful smile, whispered, "Thank you, sir," and tiptoed past. While Mr. Crumbley was hesitating an instant George plunged back into routine with, "All right, books up, first question,"—as Jit might have dived behind the shelter of a South Seas palmetto stump.—Mr. Crumbley walked away.

At a few minutes after two he hurried back into the faculty room and called the filling station again. "Not a word, Professor. Ain't heard a thing from him."

And he felt that he had come at last face to face with it. What was he going to do? Stall a while longer; pick about a while longer, like a scavenger, hoping to find a few paltry excuses, anything that would burn? Call him later; maybe Mac would do something. He had other things to think about.—And yet the thought of her, far from dissuading him, made him want to act; the current of life was running in him again—

"I'm going down to police headquarters and see what I can find out."



IT WAS TWO-THIRTY by the clock on the iron pole in front of Goodgion Jewelers when he got off the bus and walked down Jackson Street to the "barracks." The air was almost hot; a thick ball of cloud hung in front of the sun with a bright halo round it. It was warm enough to rain, yet there was no feeling of rain today.—He thought he would ask about the case quietly and calmly, not as a friend of Winn's but merely as an interested citizen who had seen the arrest; just to learn what the trouble was. And of course it was perfectly possible they would tell him Winn had been released long before. He might have, simply, not gone back to the filling station—

There was a pleasant-looking big policeman standing in the hallway tearing the glassy paper off a package of cheese crackers. George asked him where he could find out something about a man who had been arrested. The policeman put another whole cracker into his mouth and without looking up or saying anything led him to an office in which there was a broad high desk and a sergeant sitting behind it in a blue shirt writing with an old-fashioned dip pen.

George took off his hat and waited until the sergeant looked up. "Can you tell me anything about a boy you arrested named Jack Winn—"

"When'd we pick him up?"

George told him that morning, about nine-thirty, and the sergeant ran a stout first finger down a column of names in a large flat book. In a minute he stopped, drew his finger across the page and back. "Yeah, we got somebody named Jack Winn."

"He's still here?" George asked him in some surprise.

"He's still here."

"Could I talk to him a minute?"

"He's incommunicado. Come back tomorrow."

"Well—er," George hesitated. He felt that his suspicions as to Winn's guilt were correct after all; but for old time's sake he was interested in making sure the boy had the benefits he was entitled to. "Has he got a lawyer?"

"Can't tell you about that, mister; we don't furnish lawyers."

"You furnish the chance of getting a lawyer, though, if a man wants one," George said gently.

"How's that?"

"Has Winn asked for a lawyer?"

"Oh, you a lawyer, sir?"

"No, but if he wants a lawyer I'll find him one."

"I don't reckon he's thought much about lawyers yet. He's been pretty busy with his identification routine."

"What's that?"

"Photographs, fingerprints, history,—what you driving at, cap?"

"I know the boy. I'd like to get him out of here. What's his bail?"

"You'll have to see Mr. Doc Buden about that. Bail hasn't been set yet."

"What's he charged with?"

The sergeant sighed a little as if his patience were running low; he ran his finger across the page. "The ~~charge~~ is 'Disorderly Conduct.'"

"Disorderly conduct?"

"Disorderly conduct, mister. 'Cursing in the presence of ladies.'"

George stared at the policeman with his lips parted; he felt suddenly unable to speak. After the silence had lasted several seconds the sergeant lifted the lids of his veined eyes and glanced at George with an expression of does-that-answer-your-question? George still seemed able only to gaze back at him.

In a moment the sergeant looked again at the page, swished his finger across into another column and said in a tone of just clinching the matter for all time, "The offense was committed on—er—Friday night at or about nine twenty-five P.M."

George added in a voice that he hardly recognized, "At the Academy Stadium—"

"At the Frederick Academy Athletic Stadium.—Now I've given you everything I've got here on the blotter. If you want to know any more about it be in court tomorrow morning at nine o'clock sharp."

George nodded a bewildered sort of perfunctory Thank you, turning toward the door. Then he stopped. "Who ordered the arrest?"

"Mister, you come round tomorrow morning—"

He walked out of the building and stopped on the steps in the blue autumn sunshine. He heard a boy on a bicycle whisk through a leaf pile on the corner. A delivery truck rolled by with "Food Fights for Freedom" on the side and a "V" with three dots and a dash. High up against the scattered clouds a formation of bombers passed with the dreamy velvet roar of a waterfall.

He took a pack of cigarettes out of his coat pocket, rubbed it between his fingers then put it slowly back without looking at it.

He felt almost like bursting out laughing. Cursing in the presence of ladies! It just couldn't be. It was just too preposterous.

But he didn't laugh. Back there somewhere in the smell of disinfectant Winn was locked up behind a barred door, fingerprinted, photographed. It wasn't too preposterous. Something at the bottom of his lungs seemed to force him to breathe in deep and he stood there staring across Jackson Street into the mild shadows wondering if he wasn't very close to being profoundly scared. If they could do this they could do just about anything. They could throw you into a concentration camp. All that was lacking was the camp; the machinery for throwing you in was all set up. And running smoothly. If you could arrest a man for saying "Hell!" you could just about arrest him for eating his breakfast—

Oh, there was no use in his trying to find his way alone through all the legal passes and by-passes of what they could do and couldn't. Alone he was helpless; the police station might just as well have been in Timbuktu; he had to have an interpreter. He would have to talk to a lawyer. And he didn't know a lawyer; there were no lawyers in the little isolated world of textbooks and teachers where he lived,—where he had lived—

Well, Fredericksville had plenty of lawyers; he could think of several he had read about in the papers in one capacity or another. Go to one of them. It didn't matter whether you knew the lawyer or not; you didn't have to be friends with a doctor to ask him to help you. What mattered was that the lawyer should be the right type of man. The thing to do was go to the very best lawyer he could find. It probably wouldn't cost any more. In fact, the better the lawyer, the less it might cost; the right man would see the public nature of the issue involved, might be interested enough to help Winn for very little. At any rate, he wouldn't charge much for getting Winn out on bail. After that, if Winn wanted to put it in the hands of some other lawyer, that would be all right; that was Winn's own affair. All he wanted to do was get the boy on his feet again where he could look after his own interests.

Who was the lawyer he would go to if he himself was in trouble?

If he had plenty of money and didn't have to give the cost a thought? The answer sprang to his mind at once, had probably been in his mind all along—

... When he got off the bus at the Signers' Monument the clock on the Courthouse tower showed almost three-thirty. He crossed Greene Street and a minute or two later walked between the ivy-colored iron posts of the fence. An old Negro with the reserve of dignity and pride in his face of someone who had worked for long years in an enviably respectable job was peacefully smearing brass polish over the name plate beside the double door.

George felt a sudden hesitation; wasn't it presumptuous of him, a total stranger whom this lawyer had never so much as laid eyes on, never so much as heard of, to walk into his office unintroduced and present him with a little police-court issue like getting a man out on bail—

He turned the large bright knob of the door and walked into the hall. In a creamy room beyond an arch on his right a plain slender woman in her fifties was copying a legal document on a clean and quiet typewriter. She glanced up at him, continuing to write in her steady implacable rhythm.

"Could I see Mr. Utting?" He wondered if he was about to be asked whether he had an appointment but the woman smiled at him with her hands still on the keys and said with the informality of complete security, "Mr. Utting hasn't come back from lunch yet. Expecting him any minute. Would you like to wait?"

He said he would wait and the woman nodded toward the room beyond, where a pretty, wholesome-looking girl with a curious little smile seeming to lie just under her concentrated gravity wrote quietly amidst the cabinets and files and tall cases of law books.

"There's a new *Fortune* there, just come in, if you'd like to look at it,—where's—" The young woman popped up, found the magazine and laid it on the table beside a chair by the window, all in a sweeping sequence of silent motions. Everything here seemed so secure and smiling he felt almost ready to doubt the existence of cell-blocks and handcuffs, almost ready to deny the odor of dis-

infectant still clinging in his nostrils. It seemed to him again to verge on the impolite to come here with this dingy incident. Wasn't it really simply beneath Mr. Utting's notice? Wasn't it like trying to bring a traffic violation before the Supreme Court?

He sat down, glanced at the magazine and laid it aside; he didn't feel like reading. He got up and strolled about the rooms; at a front window he stood for some time looking out at the monument, at the bare pecan trees in front of the Courthouse. First the fort on the river, then the church, then the academy, then the courthouse,—fearing God and believing in education and law, but keeping their powder dry the meanwhile. And now, rising up above everything, the office building, cathedral of business,—above the trees, above the Courthouse, above the church spires, above the mill chimneys with the smoke blowing out like frazzled dark threads from the eyes of needles.—And the boy sitting up there in a cell-block—

This incident wasn't beneath Mr. Utting's notice. Wasn't it something, not trivial but extremely grave,—a sounding of the waters we were moving through today after all our long and perilous voyage? A quiet humming from ahead, deceptively innocent sounding, that was really surf breaking over a reef? "Master, we have not come through centuries, caste, heroism, fables, to halt in this land today!"

He went back to his chair and sat down. Mr. Utting might see it in that light too; if he did he would find time for it somehow. Even if he turned it all over to one of the younger men in the office, that would be quite satisfactory; whatever the advice, he was satisfied with this foretaste of its quality—

But where *was* Mr. Utting? He was wondering how long he had been waiting there when, above the steady pouring of the city sounds beyond the window, he heard the Courthouse clock strike the half-hour—

AT MIDNIGHT, WHEN the watchman struck the old bell in the square beyond the pump, General Jackson was sitting at a corner table in Goodgion's long-room with his left arm in a clean white bandage, stoically writing to a friend in Savannah by the light of a candle that dripped a glacier of tallow down the side away from the open window,—asking him to call on Mrs. Jackson and tell her as much about the incident as he considered proper for feminine sensibilities—

... after dogging me to the State house to see who was with me, whither I went for some necessary papers, unarmed as he thought, whilst a posse of his Yazoo friends collected for the purpose, stood by to assist him, "General," says he, "you are the writer of these letters in the *Gazette* signed 'Sicilius.'" "I am," said I. Says he, "I consider you the leader of a damned venal set seeking to disgrace their Country." This was done to draw on dispute. Flesh and blood of such texture as mine would not bear it, & lie & stick involuntary flew on him. Until my little Lucas stick broke, I finely frapped him. But the third blow it broke in my hand, & till then he had never struck me; but now at his mercy I received a blow on the head which for a moment stunn'd me & I fell. I rose & my blood rose with me; I made at him & was told he had pistols. This made me recollect one I carried, apprehensive of an attack from John Greene who I had been under the necessity of telling was a damn'd lyar, & I immediately exclaimed: "'Tis well. We are on a footing. Clear the way!"

It was proposed by Flournoy, one of his partisans, for us to fight in the morning. I replied that I never fought a base assassin but on the spot I met him, & I ordered him to take his ground. I should have killed him, for I fired as soon as we were open to each other, but my hand was knock'd up by one of his party & as soon as I fired he ran at me with a bayonet at the end of his pistol. We closed & twice I threw him. I soon found that I was his master as to strength & was beating him handsomely, when a scoundrel by the name of Wood turned traitor on me and the Assassin strove to gouge me. Driven to necessity I was compelled to put one of his fingers in my mouth, which made him relinquish his attempt, after skinning my eye. He then sprung another bayonet, for the

first was either taken from him or returned to him, or he had a pair on purpose, & stabbed at me repeatedly. I was all this time unarmed. He stabbed me in the left breast which fortunately entered my collar bone & ran me through my shirt and flannels, & graz'd my ribs a second time. A half inch lower in the breast, the Doctors pronounced, would have finished my business. I could whip two of him at any time, & notwithstanding my wound I was turning on him the third time, when a few of my friends collected & tore me from him. Yazoo made out a tale for him, but the mass of the people despise the attack as pitiful, dastardly & assassinating—

He stopped writing and gazed at the point of his pen. Truth to tell, the mass of the people would "despise" it about as much, wouldn't they? as a good cockfight. He thought of striking it out, but that would just call attention to it; he tempered it by adding, "As an assassin I shall ever view and regard him."

He could imagine the mingled concern and dismay on his wife's face, when he concluded his business here next week and completed his journey: "Whatever now, Mr. Jackson!" thinking if only he would just tend his own fences and leave the State to take care of itself. "Consider my children, Mr. Jackson." Children, children!

"In considering the honor of the State of Georgia, madam, I am considering your children!" Though assuredly he would not really be so pontifical,—having slept away from home for nearly three months—

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GEORGE HAD HALF a mind to call her on one the office phones, not to hear her reassurance he was doing the right thing but just to hear her voice again, after what seemed to have been months—

Two men entered the front door, their hats familiarly on their heads. They finished what they were saying and separated with the unceremoniousness of partners.

"Mr. Utting, this gentleman to see you."

George saw the larger of the two stop, turn his great shoulders

with a peculiar twist at the waist and become suddenly older as he lifted his pearl-gray hat from the round baldness of his head. He studied George for a second as if not quite sure whether he was expected to recognize him or not, then he summoned a smile that could be interpreted either way, passed his hat to his left hand and held out his right.

George told him his name and that he was a teacher out at the Academy. Mr. Utting said, "Oh, yes. Good. Always interested in our old Academy," and led the way across the hall into an office on the opposite corner luminous in the afternoon sun. "I graduated out at the Academy—Lord, I hate to think when it was." He went to the west window and changed the pitch of the Venetian blinds as if not thinking much about what he was doing but following an instinctive after-lunch routine in acknowledgment of the declining sun.

George couldn't help interrupting him; he had been waiting helplessly for twenty minutes and there seemed to be no more time to spare. "I hate to bother you—"

"Will you have a cigar?"

He said no-thank-you.

"I shouldn't dare say it was my only vice," Mr. Utting smiled, opening a humidor of dull mahogany, "but it has come to be one of my most esteemed. I don't know what they do to tobacco in Cuba. Here we are, the greatest country in the world, and we can't make a cigar fit to smoke: *Quantity v. Quality*, our modern *cause célèbre*—"

George glanced down in some dismay at the vista of irrelevant conversation that seemed to be opening up, but Mr. Utting responsiveness adapted himself to George's evident impatience; he lighted the cigar tenderly and sat down, politely passing George the lead by relapsing suggestively into silence.

"This may look like a very small matter to you, sir. A young man I know, an old pupil of mine, has been put in jail and I want to get him out."

Mr. Utting smiled, cocking his eyes: "That's not necessarily a small matter."

"I just went round to police headquarters to talk to him. They told me to come back tomorrow. They're holding him incomunicado."

"Oh, I doubt if they're doing that, Mr. Cliatt. You see it's not always practical to have visitors just any old time. They have to have their rules, just as you out at the Academy—"

"But hasn't a man a right to get a lawyer if he wants one?"

"I believe you'll find they're not denying him that right.—What's the charge against him?"

"Disorderly Conduct."

Mr. Utting gave a light snort. "Of course that's the classic catch-all."

"And they arrested him without a warrant."

He took the cigar out of his teeth and frowned a little at the white ash. "Suppose we go back to the beginning. What's your friend's name?"

George told him. "He runs a little filling station out on the Upper Road,—I mean upper Broad. I stopped in there to get some gas this morning about nine-thirty and while I was there two detectives came in and arrested him."

"Who ordered the arrest?"

"I don't know. The sergeant at the barracks told me I'd have to talk to Doctor Buden."

Mr. Utting had been returning the cigar to his teeth. His hand stopped abruptly for a long second in mid-air then went on and he said comfortably, "Some disturbance, maybe, before you drove up? The officer might—"

"No, sir, the offense was committed Friday night,—at the football game at the Academy Stadium."

Mr. Utting gave him a flat neutralized look that might have meant suppressed astonishment or suppressed disbelief, or merely that he was listening.

"I was at the game," George said. "I saw the incident."

"Tell me what you saw," Mr. Utting smiled.

George started telling him as factually as he could. Once Mr. Utting interrupted him, speaking composedly to the Venetian blinds: "This disturbance down on the field, could your friend have been implicated in that in some way?"

"No. He was sitting not twenty feet away from me."

"Well, go on. There was also a disturbance in the stands."

"Oh, nothing much. Just loud talking. Somebody said, 'Where's the police?' Winn said they were all up on Kettle Creek fishing." Mr. Utting tossed his pink head in a silent chuckle but did not interrupt. "Somebody said he oughtn't to talk that way about the Home Folks Party. And Winn said, 'To hell with the Home Folks Party'; this was a free country and he would talk as he pleased, or something like that. It wasn't a disturbance; everybody quieted down in a minute and the game went on."

Mr. Utting flopped his left hand over on to his telephone. "Let's see what we can find out about this thing? What's your friend's name?"

George repeated it to him as he started dialling a number. George looked away with a sigh at a spot of sunlight on the thick gray rug; at last the wheels were beginning to turn—

"Perse? Ashby Utting. I wonder could you find out for me anything about a little matter here. Looks like a young fellow named Jack Winn was arrested this morning on a disorderly conduct charge. Seems to be some question whether they had the proper warrant.—Yair.—Yair, I know.—The young man in my office here with me now seems to think the arrest might have been ordered by Doctor Somebody-or-other.—Umhum.—Yair—"

The conversation was ended abruptly from the other end and Mr. Utting laid his instrument down with a comforting composure. "They'll call us back in a few minutes."

George nodded his thanks. "I'm sorry to take up so much of your time—"

"That's all right."

"I can't help feeling it's a dangerous sort of thing, somehow,—this arresting a man without a warrant—"

"It is dangerous, Mr. Cliatt. I agree with you. But there may be some explanation—"

"When something like this comes on top of all the criticism you hear about the way things are run in Fredericksville,—well, I'm a teacher; I've never paid much attention to it; but—"

"What sort of criticism?"

"Oh, using prisoners from the City Stockade on private projects, using city equipment—"

"I shouldn't take that sort of rumor too seriously," Mr. Utting smiled. "There are always rumors, you know. That's politics. You can't please everybody. The 'outs' are always dissatisfied with the 'ins.'"

"I've just begun to wonder if there isn't some way to use a thing like this to get to the bottom of some of these rumors."

"Uhm.—I don't see—"

"Aren't there some grounds for taking this thing to court? Isn't it a man's constitutional right to demand to see a warrant when he's arrested?"

"Did he make that demand?"

"No, sir, but—"

"If he had made such a demand and been refused that might be a different story.—But going into court on some general law like that—" He shook his head dubiously.

"I should think this incident might be the lever to overthrow this whole—"

The telephone buzzed and Mr. Utting after an unhurried minute reached for it. He leaned back in his leather chair holding the receiver to his ear with one hand, moving the cigar in and out of his mouth with the other. After a while he said, "And how about the bail?—Uhmuhm.—Uhmuhm.—Of course there ought to be a warrant anyhow. The arrest took place almost seventy-two hours after the offense.—Oh, I understand that.—Little static on this

phone. Yair, seems to be a bad connection.—Uhmuhm. Say, half an hour?"

He laid the instrument down and swung his chair round facing George. "It's all right," he smiled. "Your friend is free. They let him go just about the time we were sitting down here."

George felt a wide grin breaking into his face. He nodded his head up and down in relief. He had been trying to free Winn and now Winn was free. His immediate feeling was intense satisfaction.

Then a slight doubt crossed his mind. "Is he out on bail?"

"I think it'll all stop right here. I don't expect there'll be a hearing; no need in the world to embarrass him with a public hearing. Chances are he'll get his fifty-two dollars back and—my guess is he's heard the last of it."

He could hardly keep himself from popping up and shaking Mr. Utting's hand. "Well, sir," he told Mr. Utting fervently, "I am certainly very much obliged to you. And I know Jack Winn will—"

"Not at all, not at all," Mr. Utting smiled. "It's unfortunate it happened but I'm glad it turned out all right. And," he dropped both hands on the arms of his chair, "that's that.—Except, as a matter of fact, I'd like to talk to your friend some time, like to know he feels he was treated round there with courtesy and consideration,—as I don't doubt he was."

"I'm sure he'd be glad to stop in any time." George picked up his hat and moved toward the door. And yet as he put his hand on the crystal knob he became reluctant to turn it. He knew he should have thanked Mr. Utting and gone; he had taken up enough of his afternoon. Still he was conscious now of a growing feeling in himself of not being completely satisfied. What about the general principle behind this thing? This particular case seemed to be dismissed; that was fine, as far as it went. But after all what was to prevent the same thing happening tomorrow to somebody else? "And you don't think, Mr. Utting," he turned round with his hand still on the knob, "this thing could be used to overthrow the whole—"

"Mr. Cliatt,—here's what I'd like to have you do. Get in touch

with your friend. Call him right here if you like. Tell him to come down here and talk to me about all this. I'll see him this afternoon,—let's see, it's about four o'clock now, or I'll see him tonight."

George's spirits lifted again; this was more like it. Now they were getting somewhere. "That's very nice of you, sir. I guess I ought to mention I don't think he's in a position to pay much of a—"

"Oh don't worry about that.—Call him on the phone there. And tell him not to discuss it with anybody until we've had a talk."

George stood up beside the desk and dialled the filling station. On the first ring a voice said, "Mac and Jack, Mac talking."

George told him who he was and asked if Jack had got back yet. "Yeah, he's been here—"

"Let me speak to him, will you, Mac?"

"He's not here now, Professor."

"I'd like to speak to him; do you know where I can find him?"

"He said he was going to the newspapers. He was pretty hot."

George thanked him and hung up. "That was his partner. He thinks Jack's gone to the newspapers—"

"Mr. Cliatt," Mr. Utting interrupted him in a new voice. He lifted the cigar firmly out of his teeth, held it in front of him and started talking to it: "Nothing can do a man's cause more harm than trying it in the newspapers. There's no telling what pack of lies and distortions those reporters will trump up to make a headline. If you can persuade your young friend to keep his shirt on a minute he may be able to avoid the embarrassment of having his arrest on everybody's tongue."

He rolled the cigar over impatiently in his broad fingers two or three times. Then he continued more placidly but still with some sternness: "You better do this." He glanced out of the window at the Courthouse clock. "It is now—just five minutes after four. It's too late for the afternoon paper. He's probably gone to

the *News*. Go up to the *News* office and catch him before the reporters get their hands on him—”

“All right, sir.”

Mr. Utting stood up. “Don’t let him talk to anybody until he’s seen me.—You better get right up there. And bring him back with you.”

George picked up his hat and took a long stride toward the door.

“If you’re too late and he’s already given them the story get to a phone and call me right away and I’ll see what I can do with the editor.” He turned to the Venetian blinds behind him and gave them a jerk—



GENERAL JACKSON UNFOLDED a bottom section of the shutters and peeped over it through the small panes of the State House window at a sight that sent a tingle into his veins. Men, women, children, babies; boys perched in rows on the bare limbs of the pecan tree like a flock of buzzards. Planters and printers; lawyers and lamp-lighters; blacksmiths and bellringers and bartenders; harness makers, coach drivers and grooms. And on the far side of the gray Bermuda lawn, among the horses and carts and hitchingposts and saddles, a frame of black heads wrapped in bright home-dyed cloths against the February chill. The people,—the whimsical, absent-minded, good-hearted sovereign; whose new kingdom he wished well, though he rather suspected it should have been a regency until the sovereign came of age—

But his eyes kept returning to the center of the open space where, inside a horseshoe line of Captain Orahood’s young Frederick Hussars in white crossbelts holding back the crowd and forming a lane from the State House door, was the detail epitomizing his triumph: “I want a sort of hearth. Lay your brick on the ground with spaces between for a draft, then another course crosswise; something about three feet square. Then get you some fat pine logs and pile them in a cone on the brick over a good hatful of

light'-ood splinters—" You could *tell* the people until you were blue in the face, but once you had *showed* them—

It was cold at the window and he walked over in front of the fire. He picked up the silver-mounted burning glass from the mantelpiece over the carved sunburst medallion, turned it over in his fingers and put it back. Of course he was taking a chance to count on a February sun; at the critical moment it might creep coolly under a cloud. But you had to take chances. He had taken them all his life; resigning from the Senate was taking a chance: if "Sicilius" had failed and the people had remained sunk in their darling apathy he would never have been, today, a member of the Georgia Assembly—

But he had taken the chances and, so far, he had won every throw. He had run on the uncompromising platform of "Repeal this infamous Act!" "Sicilius" might have written those words a thousand times, but "Sicilius" speaking the words, standing up before them with his arm swathed in bandages! That was the deadliest stroke his enemies had ever dealt themselves. He knew he was wearing the sling longer than there was any use; the wound had healed weeks before the campaign opened. But he told himself he wore it as a symbol. Anyway, they not only heard his words, they saw what their enemies had done to him.—And they elected him.

And he had been as good as his promise. He had written the repealing Act, pushed it through the committee, pushed it through the Assembly, pushed it across Jared Irwin's desk under the governor's pen. The Yazoo Fraud was a fraud no longer; the land was returned to the people, the money to the purchasers. The slate had been wiped clean.

Then why had he instigated all this circus today? Well, you might tell a boy you would cane him but his belief went a lot deeper into his soul if you stood the cane in a corner where he could look at it. The Act had been repealed, stricken from the records, "expunged." The gazettes had spread the news; citizens had told one another. Still, the knowledge was only intellectual; it hadn't

been repealed in the people's language. He wanted them to *see* the repeal, *see* the slate wiped clean. And to respond with that tightening in their throats, that surging of tears into their eyes; he wanted them to *feel* the slate being wiped clean,—and to feel who had wiped it clean. He might like to be governor someday.

If you knew the strings you could pluck your own tune. The people were sovereign; government was by their consent; but if you handed them rose-colored glasses the world was rosy, dark, and they would swear night had come. That throng out there that had voted for "Sicilius" and repeal had voted before for Watkins and the fraud; maybe sovereignty lay less in the people than in the channels through which you communicated with them.—And still, the better you succeeded with the many, the more bitterness you engendered among the few. He would have masses of friends, but his enemies compensated for their lack of numbers by their enthusiasm. Apathy, as Judge Repp might have said, was a characteristic of friends, never of enemies—

There was a knock on the door and he called "Enter!" in a serious tone, yet calm. A Negro attendant said, "The gentlemen are waiting, General, if you please, sir," with a soft smile directed at about the tops of the general's best black stockings.

He nodded, quietly fastened two of the flat brass buttons of his ivy-green coat, gave the lapels a tug to satisfy himself the high collar was against his neck, and picked up the silver handle of the burning glass.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said inclusively to the group in the hall below as he descended the white stairs; "Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Secretary," bowing with the half-facetious smile of the parliamentarian to President of the Senate Taliaferro, Speaker of the House Stephens, Secretary of State Rutherford, "and Gentlemen of the Committee.—Are the Senate and the House—"

Rutherford interrupted him to say the houses were in joint session in Representatives' Hall and a messenger had been sent to notify them.

"Would you be so good then, Mr. President and Mr. Speaker," smiling, making a slight jest of his formality, laying a hand on their shoulders, "to wait upon His Excellency and say we are quite ready to proceed at his pleasure?"

As they walked away there was a deep prolonged rumble that reminded him of far-off artillery fire on a damp Savannah Valley morning as the fifty legislators rose and moved with an unhurried solemnity down the resounding corridor. When the president and the speaker returned with Governor Irwin between them General Jackson lifted his finger to the two Negro attendants at the great double doors. As the bell in the clocktower began the slow striking of twelve the eyes of everyone turned upon him, but he indulged his sense of the dramatic by waiting, peal after peal. At the twelfth stroke he signalled and the doors flung open.

He stood aside with his committee and watched the members of the Assembly file in pairs through the broad portal and out into the horseshoe. He saw the militia company come to attention, observed even the sudden stir among the crowd, but the detail that absorbed his attention was that the sun, thank God, was shining; he had been tempted to hide the burning glass in his pocket until he could be sure.

He waited until the legislators had lined the enclosure, then nodded at Jared. The governor walked to the door and the drummers he had ordered posted at each side of the steps rolled a commanding thunder out of their draped drums. From the dark of the hall he gazed at the crowd, mouths open, necks straining, heads moving about; he saw a baby hoisted to a man's shoulder; on the outside of the square children were standing on the seats of the carts; there was a whole colony of "buzzards" in the pecan tree now. He couldn't tell whether there was cheering or not for the deafening roll of the drums.

When Jared, followed by Taliaferro and Tom Stephens and Rutherford, had proceeded toward the hearth what he considered a ceremonial distance, he nodded at his Rescinding Committee and they marched down between the drummers,—who he noticed were

now breathing through their mouths and growing a little red in the face. As he crossed the white sand road to the grass he heard somebody murmur, "There's General Jackson!" but he looked straight ahead as if hearing nothing, though he rotated the handle of the burning glass a few times in his fingers behind his back. The murmur grew into a flurry of cheers as he walked on, hands waved,—the hands that had marked an overwhelming majority of ballots for the Legislature that had betrayed them, the voices that had hardly whispered their indignation until "Sicilius" had told them they were indignant—

He took his place in the inner circle about the hearth. When the others arrived he signalled Captain Orahood and the drums seemed to burst into silence; the thunder ceased as if he had clipped it with a pair of shears. He then stepped slowly forward beside the hearth, waited a moment and pronounced in a tone that was like gleaming black broadcloth:

"By authority of the law recently enacted by this Legislature, providing that the usurped Act of January 7th, 1795, shall be expunged from the face and indexes of the books of record of the State,—and that the same shall be publicly burnt, in order that no trace of so," he lowered his chin against his white stock then tossed his head, conscious of the mass assent lifting him like a tide, "unconstitutional, vile, and fraudulent a transaction, other than the infamy attached to it by this law, shall remain in the offices thereof, —I do now kindle the fire in which this shameful Act shall be consumed." He brought the burning glass from behind his back and went on, "Since it is beyond the power of earthly fire to manifest the indignation which this occasion requires, I therefore, by the grace of God, call down fire from heaven to purify this stain from the annals of Georgia."

Amid the tense mumbles rising from all sides, he kneeled beside the brick, arranged three or four splinters of lightwood in a little resinous pile and lifted the burning glass at arm's length. He lowered it gravely until the spot of bright light contracted into a pale blue point as large as his thumbnail on the middle of the

splinters; then he drew the beam backward as if stretching a thread and watched the spot pressing tight upon itself to the size of a pin head, the blue deepening into a livid needle point from which a fine string of smoke rose in an aromatic wisp, and he smelled the flame before he could see it.

When it had grown to the size of his three fingers he brushed the splinters into the red kindling under the cone of logs. The smoke thickened with a black heaviness, the flames leaped up, as long as his hand, as his forearm. Then, as the voice of the people leaped upward out of the square in a great licking cheer, he rose from his knee in triumphant vindication, his eyes wet with emotion.

As if in disdain of their approval he nodded at the secretary of state. Rutherford, who had been holding the Act in both hands inconspicuously before him, stepped forward, unrolled it by lifting it above his head, and as the throng pulled in on the leash of its excitement and grew still, handed the Act to the president of the Senate. Taliaferro accepted it, held it open before him at arm's length, and scrutinized it with a lawyer's care; then he strode across to the speaker of the House and handed it to him. Tom Stephens, not to be outdone, examined it on both sides and fingered through it to the signatures and the seal. Finding everything in order, he handed it to the clerk of the House who paced soberly to the open side of the circle, turned his back to the State House and, facing the crowd now awed into a silence broken only by the eager snapping of the pine flames, lifted up his newly shaved chin and read the title of the Act in a loud voice.

At the end of the title the clerk waited for a minute while the gentlemen spontaneously enlarged the circle, for the roaring heat was pressing them backward like a wind. Then he strode portentously to the messenger of the House and placed the paper in his hand.

The messenger turned about and faced the flames, grasping the Act tightly with all his fingers. Gazing solemnly off over the heads of the crowd, he said in a deep slow tone: "God save the State!—And long preserve her rights!"

He stopped speaking and for a moment General Jackson thought the fellow had forgotten the two lines he had written for him and rehearsed him in a hundred times. The general was about to prompt him when, to his great relief, the man at last lifted the paper high over his head and cried, "And may every attempt to injure them perish as these corrupt Acts now do!" And he stepped forward, squinting into the heat, and threw the papers into the flames.

It suddenly occurred to the general he had meant to have the drums roll as the Act was tossed into the fire; he had forgotten to give Orahood his cue. He hesitated an instant, wondering whether the proper moment might not have passed, then he caught the captain's eye and signalled.

A second later the drummers burst into an even mightier thunder than before and he turned about to the crowd and started a long yell, passing his quivering hand slowly through the air and lifting out of the teeming square a responsive shouting cheer that drowned the drums into oblivion. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the drummers, their wrists whirling, the points of their sticks a blur against the stained sheepskin, but there was not the sound of a drum to be heard. He felt the tears beginning to run down his face as he clasped the hands, one after another, of the legislators, their lips forming inaudible words like someone talking behind a pane of glass.

But what they said didn't matter. What mattered was that he had had an audience with the sovereign,—and been all but knighted—



GEORGE TURNED DOWN Law Range toward Broad Street and the river, working his way to the front of a group of men that might have been a jury just dismissed. He overtook a pair of white-legged young women from a law office probably on their way to the drug-store on the corner; he passed an older woman and a man in over-

alls with his thumb in a new white bandage that smelled of a doctor's office—

He wondered what these people, these sovereign particles of America, would do if he faced them, held up his hand and said in a clear quiet voice, "Men and women, one of your fellow citizens was arrested this morning without a warrant for saying 'To hell with the Home Folks Party.'"—With all his kindly faith in them, did he really think they would do anything? Wouldn't the stenographers go on to the soft-drink stand and buy coca-colas, the man in overalls go on back to his pliers, the lawyer go on to the clerk's office, the insurance man go on back to his policies? Some surprise, maybe; some resentment; a good deal of the simple dodging and flight of chickens when you disturbed them. Whatever the resentment or anger or indignation, it wouldn't compare with the moment when the workman hit his thumb;—or the moment of the stenographer's getting a run in her Sunday stockings, or of any one of these men's finding some boys letting the air out of his tires on Hallowe'en. Somebody would have to explain it to them; that somebody Mr. Dobit was always talking about,—that "one."

He turned left into the wide main street and hurried on through a district of automobile showrooms bare of automobiles, of used-car lots, of tires being retreaded, his feeling of urgency all the more poignant from the taut sense of strangeness at finding himself fingering the fringes of the law; it was almost a sense of being in the presence of illness, with the yellow and red and blue tomes lining Dr. Utting's walls like surgical instruments in an antiseptic case. True, it wasn't himself who was ill; that gave him a certain blessed remoteness. All he was trying to do was get Jack Winn back on his feet again, just as it was merely reasonable and decent to try to get a stranger who was hurt to the hospital; hand Winn over to Mr. Utting and he could return with a clear conscience to his own world—that wasn't flat any more but in relief, like the views in Mrs. D'Antel's ancient stereoscope on the marble-topped table, seen from where he stood and from where Allen stood. It

wasn't his affair; he hadn't been hurt. It wasn't up to him to be that "somebody," that "one"—

When he ran up the stairs to the editorial office of the *News* he was prepared to find Winn in a chair with two or three reporters round him, giving them the details,—and probably not completely unhappy.

The long room seemed matter-of-fact enough in spite of the continuous sort of impending chatter from a door marked "Teletype." He looked about at the desks but Winn was not at any of them. He tried to extinguish his flash of relief by telling himself the reporters might have taken Winn into another office for quiet. He crossed to a wide desk and said to a thin-haired man who looked up at him past the rim of a homemade eyeshade, biting the stem of a corncob pipe, "Has a young fellow been in here named Jack Winn?"

"Don't know him, brother. What's on your mind?"

He was so elated at having got there ahead of the boy that he replied only by thanking the man and walking back out of the office and down to the sidewalk.

Winn was not in sight. George studied for a moment the sun-flecked tunnel under the sycamores; a few people were coming and going but none was Winn. He began strolling patiently up and down the brick pavement in front of the office, watching as now and then one of the great tobacco-colored sycamore leaves fell twisting and tumbling to the ground with all the brown accent of autumn. It was not perfectly clear in his mind, now that he had a moment to think about it, just why the incident should be kept out of the newspapers. He was as anxious to do exactly what Mr. Utting advised as,—well, as he would have been to follow the instructions of a doctor; but he didn't understand it. The whole episode had been something out of a strange land to him; it was like coming on a jury summons in the pages of a textbook. He wondered if the truth might not be that Mr. Utting was simply not convinced Winn hadn't done something that morning to justify the arrest: looking at the situation from the point of view of his

client, he was reluctant to publicize it until he had all the facts personally from Winn. That was understandable. He himself was convinced Winn was innocent; the very fact of his wanting to go to the newspapers proved that—to him. But a lawyer might see the possibility of technicalities that would leave Winn innocent enough in his own eyes yet guilty in the eyes of the law. Mr. Utting might, logically, want to be positive that was not the case before presenting it to the people. If that was it he could understand it and agree with it and be honestly glad he had reached the paper in time.

But it was embarrassing to keep Mr. Utting waiting. He opened his big watch and looked at it again; it was after four-thirty. It shouldn't have taken half an hour to get from the filling station to the newspaper. He wondered if Winn could have gone home first. To change his clothes; you probably felt like taking a bath after five hours of—

He stepped inside the business office and asked a young woman if he could borrow her phone. He had half a mind first to call Mr. Utting, who must have been wondering what had happened to him, but after a second he went on and called the station.

"I'm at the newspaper," he told Mac. "Jack hasn't been here. Was he going anywhere else first?"

"He looked like he was in a hurry to me."

"Well, I've been at the *News* office over half an hour and—"

"Oh, he was gonna catch the evening paper!"

George felt his throat suddenly tighten.

"Yes, sir, he said he wanted people to know about it right now; he wasn't gonna wait'll tomorrow—"

He thanked the boy with an unintentional gruffness, hung up and rushed out under the white-streaked sycamores.

His first thought was that all was lost now. Mr. Utting might reasonably enough refuse to touch the case, with all this having happened directly contrary to his advice; Winn had probably been talking to the *Journal* reporters for twenty minutes or more. But as he turned into Broad Street on the longest strides he had used

in many years he remembered it was too late for the *Journal* anyhow. Even if Winn had seen the reporters they wouldn't be able to use the information until next day. He slowed down in his walk; the only thing he needed to worry about was finding Winn; if he could find him and take him to Mr. Utting immediately—

When he met Winn face to face coming out of the *Journal* office, for a second George hardly recognized him. Winn looked like a different man. His brown hair was rumpled and his eyes were angry and tired; his skin was shiny with dried sweat and the sleeves of his khaki work shirt were soiled where he had been wiping his face. His leather bow tie had slipped round half under his collar.

“Jack!”

Winn halted on the steps and looked at him, but his expression of dull indignation didn't change. He began talking in a flood: “They fingerprinted me. They photographed me. With a number round my neck. They wouldn't let me call a lawyer—”

George tried to interrupt him. “That's all right,” he told him in a quiet, even tone. “I've got you a lawyer, the best lawyer in town—”

“Then they took me to Doc Buden's office and he lit into me. He said did I want to make this a personal matter. Because if I did he would just knock my God-damned head off my shoulders right there. I told him I was criticizing his public life and the Home Folks Party and that's what I paid taxes for and that wasn't any crime and that's why I live in this country and not in Nazi Germany—”

“Listen to me a minute. I think you ought to talk to a lawyer.”

“P'fessor, I don't have to talk to a lawyer to know you can't pick me up without a warrant and put me in a cell because I say I don't like the Home Folks Party. You just can't do that. They put me in a cell and let me stay there in the stinking place with a drunk and a dope peddler. I never been locked up before in my life—”

“Let me say something—”

“They wouldn't let me call anybody. They took my picture for

the rogues' gallery and they fingerprinted me like a common criminal. They made me put up fifty-two dollars bail before they'd turn me loose—”

“Now listen. It doesn't do any good to just stand there and holler about it.—Have you been talking to the paper?”

“I sure have. I want the people to know about it. My number's due to come up at my local board any time now and I don't see what sense it makes to go off fighting—”

“Look!—Mr. Utting thinks it's better not to put it in the paper until—”

“I believe in telling the people about it. People won't stand for this sort of thing. Not American people. We don't take to being kicked around. Having some public official shake his fist in your face and tell you he's going to knock your head off!—They're getting out an extra—”

“An extra!”

“Yeah, I saw 'em write the story. They took me back and showed me three linotype machines setting it up. It'll be on the street any minute—”

George pulled him out of the doorway into one of the little alleys that intersected the large blocks. He hardly knew what to say; important as he felt the incident was, he hadn't expected the papers to do more than carry it in their regular editions. He supposed there were plenty of explanations, from the fact the *Journal* had long been relatively cool to the Home Folks, to the fact the “extra” was probably more just a stop-press change in the final edition—

Though all that was a detail and beside the point. The point was, what would Mr. Utting say now? They hadn't really disregarded his advice but the result was the same. If Mr. Utting now simply washed his hands of the whole affair George thought he could hardly blame him. He hated to go back and tell him what had happened,—but there was no way of stopping the extra and Mr. Utting would know about it soon enough.

“The way to handle this thing, Jack, is through the law.”

“I haven't got any money to hand a lawyer.”

"Maybe it won't cost much. Maybe not anything. The right kind of lawyer isn't going to take advantage of something like this."

"I b'lieve in telling the people about it. The people are boss in this country—"

"All right, but—"

"Tell 'em! That's what I say. Tell 'em!—They'll raise a howl that'll throw this whole bunch of cheap gangsters out on their ear. Why this might happen to anybody—"

"All right, all right."

"Next time it may be you. Maybe they won't like something you say in class—"

"All right. But just making the people mad won't do it. Somebody has got to go to the law about it. It's all right about this extra; let the people know about it. But let's not stop there. Let's see what the law is—"

"I know lawyers in this town. I don't believe you could get one to touch it."

"Wait a minute now. What law firm would you be satisfied with? If they would handle it and you had plenty of money? Would you be satisfied with Biggerstaff, Brown and Utting?"

"Sure, but there's no use—"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you. I've already seen Mr. Utting and he's waiting to talk to you."

Winn stopped and for the first time seemed really to look outward away from himself.

"I went to him about getting you out. He sent me to find you. He wants to talk to you. I told him you couldn't pay much and he said not to worry about that—"

"No kidding."

"He didn't want you to give it to the papers until you saw him, —but maybe we can persuade him to help you anyhow—"

He stopped as a lanky newsboy dodged past them running from the back of the building with an armful of papers. George whistled at him, bought one and snapped it out open before them. At the top of the page was the four-column headline:

WELL KNOWN CITIZEN ARRESTED  
LOCKED UP, FINGERPRINTED AFTER  
REMARKS MADE AT FOOTBALL GAME

They read the article through word by word, standing in the mouth of the alley while boys of all sizes and shapes raced past them screeching with a subtle contentment at their bedlam's being irreproachable.

"That's how it was, P'fessor. That's just about exactly right—"

George folded the warm sheets in a tight roll. "Come on. We're going to talk to Mr. Utting."

"O.K. Hold everything a minute while I get some of these papers for mama."

George reached in his pocket for some change to buy them for him but Jack broke into a limber run down the alley. George waited for him indulgently, watching the newsboys scattering in all directions, up, down and across the street, stopping now and then on one foot to grab a perhaps slightly skeptical nickel.

After what seemed a long time Winn returned with eight or ten copies. "They give 'em to me," he smiled. George grasped his arm and pulled him off hurriedly down the sidewalk.

When he turned the brass knob and walked into the office the two secretaries were standing at one of the large windows of the reception room sharing the front page of the extra.

"Could we see Mr. Utting, please?"

The elder, who had spoken to him before, looked up at him this time with a different expression and said distantly, "Mr. Utting has gone for the day."—He felt his cheeks growing quietly warm—

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MR. WILLIAM LONGSTREET covered the iron band with the coals and started pumping on the bellows, the heat rising against his thin cheeks with the acid scent of the reviving embers. Sometimes he

thought if he could only have carried on all this labor in secret it wouldn't have seemed such labor,—all this thinning of a band here, this swaging of a bolt there, this endless trial and error, working between those two confining limitations of making the boiler heavy enough to bear the pressure yet not so heavy as to swamp the old boat; if all that, year in, year out, could have been carried on free from prying eyes, well, maybe he would have reached his goal before the dawn of the new century,—impossible now with less than two months left of the old, wornout, discouraged eighteenth.

He glanced out through the door of the shop at the high palings of the fence he had put up along the Broad Street soon after he had bought the forge from Mr. Frazier's widow. The fence had been tight enough when he had built it and the boards seasoned too, though not so dry the August suns couldn't pull them apart; now almost any afternoon, when the Academy let out, he could feel the stares of the boys peeping through the cracks,—whistling and chattering as they came down the street, then a sudden intense silence, then after a while a derisive cry of "Billy-boy!" and a scampering of feet. Derision reflecting derision at home—

And yet it would have been a simple matter to block the chinks with other boards. Perhaps he more than half appreciated their interest. God knows, it was lonesome enough anyhow; if interest and encouragement was too much to hope for, why, interest alone was something. He often thought of the old man in London writing his dictionary, or rather writing his letter at last to the noble lord: "Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door—" He used to know the whole thing by heart, used to recite it to the anvil on dark days: "During which time (r-ring!) I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance (r-ring!), one word of encouragement (r-ring!), or one smile of favor—"

There were smiles enough in Fredericksville; just not the right kind. Nobody seemed able to get used to the overpowering comedy

of it. "A steam boat!" if it was a stranger talking; "Billy's steam boat!" or merely "Billy's boat!" if between themselves. He could see the joke simmering in the faces of everybody he met on the streets, from members of the Legislature to Goodgion's porters at the *Globe*—

He turned the band over and covered it up again; it was beginning to fade into red now, the porous red of a blackgum tree in November with the sun behind it. Sometimes he would leave the gate ajar and let the boys come in the yard, trying to make friends with them, though it wasn't easy to do against the talk they heard at home; talking back and forth to them was sometimes better than not talking. They were interested in all the paraphernalia, climbed up on the rollers into the hull of the periagua Mr. Weatherford had sold him. "This thing'll swamp her again, Mr. Longstreet—"

"She'll carry seven casks of tobacco, won't she?"

"Yes, sir, but this thing's all in one place—"

It wouldn't sink the boat. Not this time. He had reckoned it out to the last ounce. Before, he had forgotten to figure in the weight of the water in the boiler and the weight of the lightwood, which wasn't light at all but very heavy—

A beautiful warm Georgia day, two years ago in the fall of '97, the rich black pine-smoke pouring out of the stack and the steam beginning to hiss in'a white feather through the safety cock, giving the signal to be shoved out into the current,—there before the whole town. If only he didn't have to make the tests before the whole town, with everybody lining the banks as if it was a gander pulling, laughing, talking, waiting; waiting for something to go wrong. He knew; and each time he tried, it seemed to raise the stakes and heighten the fun. Sliding out into the current under all their grins at the look of the contraption, which, no doubt, was, indeed, not beautiful, but he hadn't built it for beauty. And then, before he could turn the steam into the chest for a single sweep of the paddles, the dark water beginning to spout up through the bottom from the wrenched seams. And having to shout for help to get the boat

back to shore before she went down, with the labor and hopes of five years.—And, as if that were just what they had come on purpose to see, a sudden mass movement of everybody pointing, turning to friends, doubling up with laughter, waving, whistling—

He could feel the blood mounting up behind his ears at the very memory of it. Not in shame at having failed but in blind anger at the stupidity with which these people resisted any attempt at human progress; they couldn't imagine that one day steam might be brought to the aid of wind, that boats, even larger boats than a mere periagua, might be propelled at twice the speed of sails alone. They simply couldn't believe it,—they, the people!

And yet, of course it wasn't just "the people." When he wrote that letter to Governor Telfair, one night when everything had seemed so black, remembering the old man in London and his dictionary,—Sir, I make no doubt but you have heard of my steam boat and as often heard it laughed at. But in this I have only shared the fate of all other projectors, for it has been uniformly the custom of every country to ridicule even the greatest inventions until use has proved their utility—

Asking only his "assistance and patronage." And receiving not even a reply. Seven years, my lord—

But even Mr. Johnson didn't know what ridicule meant. He didn't have to submit his work to the people until it was done,—the people, sitting back and waiting, waiting to be lifted up or to be cast down; waiting while the Legislature sold their lands, waiting until "Sicilius" told them they were indignant, taking whatever was handed them, bad or good. They thought as someone who had their ear told them to think. They were the fertile field in which you could raise almost anything you chose to, if you knew how to cultivate it,—which he did not; they were the spectators at the races, the audience at the opera—

He laid the band, fired to the color of a rising sun, on the point of the anvil and stood there looking at it, the hammer hanging down against his leather apron; the audience at the operal He would never forget that night,—putting on his tall hat, rusty but

still charged with some of its soul-lifting magic, Hannah in her best flowered-silk brocade, walking together to the Opera House on Bridge Street, the lightwood torches flaming on the pedestals outside and shining in the gloss of the carriages, shining on Governor Telfair and his lady, on many a chief citizen, on the black grooms and footmen almost invisible against the night, standing there obscurely in the shadows a while for Hannah to drink in the newest fashions straight from London. Then troup ing with the rest gaily into the bright candle-light, for a stage show was no everyday thing in Fredericksville, and sitting on the hard bench in the pit with the hat on his knee, the gallery above them abuzz with chief-citizens' buzz. And then quiet, and songs and dances and choruses, and then! The comedian plunking a dancing tune on his gray banjo, singing some verses of a popular song, strutting back and forth until Hannah nudged him, hardly able to keep still with the jolly music, both of them ready to laugh aloud at his comical movements. Then halting in the middle of the stage for another verse, facing them and bursting into:

Can you row your boat to shore,  
Billy-boy, Billy-boy—

The audience all at once still as with a gasp! And he still, too, with a catch of his breath, staring motionless at the man's mouth.

Can you row your boat to shore,  
Billy-boy?

Casting a leer and a wink out into the hall,—while the world seemed to tilt up this way and that.

Can you row your boat to shore,  
Without a paddle or an oar—

And feeling his face grow numb under the cascade of laughter and ironical applause, with heads turning at him and Hannah, and eyes glinting and nods and pointings, and the blood rushing into the old

wound again until his checks must have been the color of the fired band,—now grown too cold to work.

He thrust it back into the coals, piled the embers over it again with the end of the tongs, reached for the bellows rope; he pulled it as if it had been attached to some chief-citizen's pink chuckle clacking down about his ears from the gallery—

And sometimes he thought even Hannah looked on it all with misgiving,—lifting her eyes the other day from her charcoal smoothing-iron and gazing out into all this confusion in her yard that might have grown a garden—



IN ONE ABSENT-MINDED movement Allen licked the ball of her middle finger and bounced it with an infinitesimal pop off the bottom of the electric iron. Mary'll iron Jeff's things for you, darling,—a scratchy grain of reproof in the beautiful dear word that possibly only mothers-in-law knew how to insert, with all the implications of other backgrounds, other customs, other habits, none of them quite so good as these. She didn't mind doing it, rather liked to. There was something about ironing that made you want to sing, dreamily, half to yourself. Like a kettle. It was almost like smoothing your rough-dried thoughts. And she had a good many to smooth today, a heavy wash—

She brushed the damp gauze over the cotton, tossed it back in the bowl of water and pushed the shiny point with slight coaxing shakes down the small sleeve, a steamy pleasant brown smell rising up and bringing her pictures of the kitchen at home on ironing day and the irons sitting upright on the shelf of the stove like a family of fat squirrels,—“Who, me?”

If there was one moment at which she had begun to draw close to this man it was the moment of “Who, me?” Speaking to Jeff, forgetting her, a minute gleam of gentleness and quiet, of familiarity with such things as squirrels and dogs and children—

Suppose she never heard from him again. Suppose he hadn't really liked her, something she had said, hadn't said, some word out of another background strange to Georgia ears,—like mad *at* instead of mad *with*, like— She would see him again. As sure as she would see the sun again. And then what? Then what? Mother Estes—

Yesterday, in the semistarched after-church slackness, inviting Allen darling out on the porch. "Let's talk a little about all this, dear," lifting off her hat by the wide brim and pushing her fingers into the long white strands of her hair. And glancing sideways, without approval, at Allen's hand reaching almost desperately for her cigarettes. Did she think it looked quite right? Did she think it *was* quite right? Coming home at all hours—

"It wasn't very late—"

"Of course, dear, I know you're a grown woman. You ought to be perfectly able to take care of yourself."

"Oh, I am! You needn't worry about that." And trying to lighten the tone by smiling, "Camp towns give a girl a lot of practice."

But it was different now, dear. You were married, you were a mother; your first duty now was to little Jeff, you know. "And Jeff's father," looking off into the tepid purple foliage, "You mustn't forget him either." Wanting to say she wasn't forgetting either one of them, but not saying it. Wanting to say many other things too, half angry, but wanting more to preserve the surface of politeness between them that had seemed to be so much more deeply affectionate than it did now,—that was the very least of the conditions under which she could stay here. And she wanted to stay, at any rate, for a while longer; she had to stay—

She laid the folded warmth of the shirt on a corner of the tufted bedspread and brushed another one out flat on the board with the palms of her hands. Why did she have to stay? Where was she trying to make all this lead, anyway? It was a beautiful current but it was not flowing in circles; it was moving toward something, whether she wished it or not. And she knew well enough the "something" would be one of only a few possibilities.—Marriage?

She bore down on the iron with a sudden strength. The idea

made her shudder. Certainly not marriage.—But there was no such thing as “marriage”; there were only an infinite number of particular marriages. Marriage to John was not the same thing as marriage to Paul. All right; marriage to George then. Was that what she wanted? Or what she was drifting to, or might be drifting to? Mrs. George Cliatt. Allen Cliatt. Yes, Allen married a school-teacher in Georgia; with less than two hundred dollars a month. Of course she had the insurance policy, and the child continued to get part of the pension,—about eighty dollars a month, which gave them something like two hundred and seventy—

Very well, then. If not marriage, what? Was she just trying to get away from something, from loneliness, from the sort of hollow aching in the flesh of her arms for wanting to hold someone against her? If that was all she wanted,—and she had known many a wife, many an “army wife,” whose husband had become little more than an APO number, who was satisfied with that—

Oh, she didn’t want that. Between her and that was a barrier, which she didn’t even want to surmount, of parents and habits and ways of thinking,—of Jeff and his fatherlessness—

What else then? A beautiful friendship, a beautiful hearty conversational friendship? A fairy tale for the boys and girls,—the *Arabian Nights* abridged to one slim volume—

But she could drift a while, they could; conditions might change. All sorts of things might happen; they wouldn’t offer other alternatives but they might make choosing easier, even inevitable. Maybe he wouldn’t love her; maybe he loved someone else; maybe something would come between them. Sufficient unto the day was the—beauty thereof—

She heard the bell of the telephone begin its sudden rhythmic ringing at the top of the white stairs. Not a word from him Saturday, not a word Sunday. She tilted the iron back on its end, waited for a second with her fingers round the handle, then lowered the point and began working it round the base of the collar.

She heard Mrs. Estes answer it. “Oh, Allen. It’s for you, dear,” with a minute irony that might have been entirely imaginary. Lift-

ing the iron abruptly, holding it suspended, setting it down with a bang,—then walking down the neat hall with as indifferent a step as she could manage.

She answered coolly and even when he told her who it was said only, "Oh, hello," not pronouncing his name,—as though Mother Estes didn't know already. He wanted her to have supper with him. "I've had quite a day," he said.

"What happened?" She didn't expect him to tell her much about it, didn't want him to, but she needed a few seconds to decide whether it meant more to stay or to go,—to be a daughter-in-law, a widow, a mother or to—

"I'd have to be back awfully early," as if not wishing to acknowledge to herself she was accepting. He said he would come for her in half an hour and she made some cryptic reference to having to take some letters to the Post Office that she was afraid was clearer to Mother Estes than him, hating herself for falling so glibly into subterfuge.

When she laid the instrument gently in its cradle she sat for an instant expecting Mother Estes to call her, but there was no sound. She rose and took a step down the corridor. Then she turned about, went back and knocked on the half-open door. "I'm going to give Jeff his supper now. And then I'm going out for a while. I'll be back by nine-thirty or ten."

There was no answer and she stepped into the room. Mrs. Estes was standing at her husband's bureau in front of a photograph of her son in his Air Forces uniform. Allen remembered when it had been taken, in San Francisco, hardly ten days before he sailed—

She went to her side and put her arms round her and held her to her breast like a large child. "Dear Mother Estes." She kissed the wet hot skin of the older woman's cheek. "Don't worry; it's nothing, nothing at all. You've been so good to me, you and Father Estes. What would I have done without you? I don't want to displease you—"

"But, Allen, my dear—"

"But sometimes I think I am going to die of lonesomeness. Lone-

someness even with everything I have. That's all it is. Just a little friendship. Just to be admired a little, liked a little,—just to like a little—”

Mrs. Estes picked up a crumpled handkerchief from in front of the picture and slowly crushed it in her fist. “Does *he* mean nothing more to you, Allen, than—” She stopped in the midst of a word and walked away to the window.

She heard herself saying into the silence the words she had said only to herself. “I don't think he would mind. I think he would want me to go on living—”

“I must say I think you are taking it all very lightly.”

“Oh, no I'm not!” She was afraid she was going to sink to the floor in a flood of tears. “Oh, no I'm not at all!”

She hurried back to her room, closed the door without a sound and fell across the bed, burying her face in the pillow.

In a few minutes she got up and washed her face in cold water. Was it possible she could be wrong? Was it not her life, after all, but someone else's? Suppose she didn't go to meet him—

But she was going. Even if there had been some way to call him and say she wasn't coming, she wouldn't have called him. Maybe she could ask him what he thought about this; he was a fine understanding friend.—She put away her ironing piece by piece; when she had wrapped the cord about the iron she crossed her knuckles over the handle and stood looking down at them for a long time—



FRAZIER WAS GLAD he hadn't owned a beaver hat for he might have worn it; he had put on his church-going coat, the sleeves still warm from Abby's smoothing iron, stretched up his neck until she was satisfied with the stiff black bow, and if he had owned a beaver she would undoubtedly have insisted on setting it on his head,—as if he were president of the Georgia Railroad or the Fredericksburg Banking Company instead of merely the city engineer—

“ ‘This twelfth day of March,’ ” the clerk began to read in a somewhat magnificent tone, “ ‘in the year eighteen hundred and forty-five: An ordinance to provide for the construction of a canal for trading and manufacturing purposes, and for the better securing an abundant supply of water—’ ”

Frazier looked about the Council Chamber from his seat on the front bench at the semicircle of councilmen, at the rows of chief citizens in the spectators’ seats, everybody brushed and shaved and whisked for the occasion, with walking sticks and watch chains and a chin-in-the-collar solemnity that would have done credit to the United States Congress. He fingered the bow she had tied for him: it was evidently as elegant as before—

“ ‘Whereas, certain banking institutions, with the view of facilitating the construction of a canal for the purposes indicated in the title of this ordinance, have proposed, upon certain conditions, to advance to the city council certain sums of money for the prosecution of said work; and whereas, the citizens of Fredericksburg at a late public meeting, with great unanimity—’ ”

He well remembered the meeting; fires in all four grates of the Council Chamber that night and a January blast shuddering the high windows and all but drowning out the speakers, his work sheets on his knee waiting to make his report, a little nervous, more used to running a transit. He remembered Mr. Campbell, president of the Fredericksburg Land Company, pausing in his talk to take a swallow from the front of the tin dipper and going on almost before the water could get down his throat: “The Fredericksburg Canal, gentlemen, would, or I should say ‘will,’ provide us with benefits as great as the Erie Canal provides the people of New York State. We shall have, not merely cotton mills, but flour mills, sugar mills, silk mills, lumber mills. In ten years Fredericksburg will be the rival of any manufacturing center at the North—”

Yes, maybe so, maybe so, he had said to himself; when the producer of the raw materials manages to become also the processor, that certainly often looked like prosperity. He had learned his engineering, though, in Massachusetts, and he could still see the

vast red walls of the cotton mills rising up everywhere, as if Massachusetts were planning on doing the processing herself.

“—a broad highway for commerce with the counties upriver now shut off to us by the rapids in the Savannah. Barges loaded with cotton and raw materials will be delivered into the heart of the city, returning laden with plows and manufactured articles for the farms—”

He had wondered why they had to excavate so many words before they could excavate a canal; the bankers were ready to lend the money, the council was ready to draw up the ordinance; he had surveyed the line—

“—the New England air becomes so dry they have to introduce steam into the weaving rooms; we have no such trouble in Georgia . . . our water courses never freeze . . . excellent white labor . . . more yards per loom than they can. In fact, gentlemen, I make the prediction the South will drive the North out of the market in brown goods, standard shirtings and sheetings—”

Maybe so, maybe so,—if the North would drive.

He remembered noticing that one of the whale-oil lamps in a wall bracket was beginning to smoke. He saw Mr. Silas Weatherford Meigs put back his head and stare at it with an indignant frown; he thought perhaps Mr. Meigs would get up and turn down the wick, but Mr. Meigs lifted his black walking stick by the middle and beckoned its gold head at one of the Negro attendants.

“And now, gentlemen, Mr. Frazier, the city engineer, is here with us tonight—”

Walking over to the table with his worksheets, glad of a chance to move: “On September 5, 1844,” he didn’t believe in approximations, “I was asked to examine the practical obstacles standing in the way of constructing a canal from the heart of the city to a point above the rapids. I found that by going upstream six and seven-eighths miles—”

His first sight on the great project ran two degrees west of north-west, from a spot near the Jackson Street tollgate straight across a raised pasture on the old George Walton place and into the pine

woods, the early September sun behind him still brimful of heat. He swung a long curve across the Upper Road, round the base of the low hill with the old white house on top that people said was haunted, the red land flattening out here into a marsh beneath the spring, plowing on, the mud halfway up his boots, the mosquitoes whining,—determined to find a way because this was the biggest thing he had ever done, because of the feeling it gave you of being in stride with the times. Other canals would be built in other places, engineers would come to see what his problems had been, how he had solved them,—Frazier, you know, was the young engineer in charge of the great Fredericksville Canal—

“—with a normal head of water at the intake point. A fall of six inches to the mile would be easily sufficient to generate power for a hundred and fifty thousand spindles and twenty-five hundred looms—”

One day, sitting on the edge of the clearing beyond the spring, within sight of the river now, the gray shingles of the old house just visible behind him over the red-gold broomsedge, unwrapping their pieces of chicken and pork and bread and cheese, one of the Negroes came up rubbing something black between his hands: “What you reckon’s this here, Mr. Frazier?”

It was a ball, not much bigger than a tennis ball, looking at it still glossy with the wet mud, not wanting to take it in his washed hands but unable to resist a desire to feel it. It was iron. “Where’d you get this thing?”

“Down there in the bottom, stump my toe—”

It must have weighed six or eight pounds—

“That’s a cannon ball, Mr. Frazier,” one of his rodmen said.

They all laughed. “What’s a cannon ball doing up here?”

“I don’t know, sir, but I know a cannon ball—”

“Demmy’s a soldier, Mr. Frazier; he drills every Tuesday night in the Clinch Rifles—”

He handed it back to the colored man. “Bring it by my house sometime and I’ll give you a quarter for it,” wondering if the chil-

dren might not like to play with it if they thought it was a cannon ball—

“Section Seven: And be it further ordained by the authority aforesaid that so soon as the said canal, with works therewith connected, shall have been completed . . .”

He remembered finishing his dinner and propping himself against the shady side of a tree and studying the notes and bearings he had entered in his fieldbook and thinking in the back of his head that in five years, if the council passed the ordinance, he might sit under that tree and look down at the high canalbanks and the tow mules and the barges, at the black iron wheels over the sluice gates, at the huge brick cliffs of the cotton mills hunched over the churning raceways,—mills and raceways that might have been built at Fall River, at Lowell.—It was an odd little fact, wasn’t it? that the bitterest denunciations of the South and slavery came practically out of the shadow of the Massachusetts cotton mills. Honest men, no doubt, thinking their thoughts, speaking their convictions; but where did a man’s thoughts and convictions come from? The churning raceways would come out of the canal; the canal out of the river. If you controlled what entered, you controlled what emerged. What would the people have thought about the Stamp Act if Sam Adams—

“. . . and necessary aqueducts, wasteways, bridges, and other works therewith connected.” The clerk pulled off his wire-rimmed glasses, lifted his eyes and drew in a long breath; he turned round and in the midst of the heavy silence handed the ordinance to the mayor.

“Gentlemen of the Council,” said Mayor Hammerton, rising portentously to his feet as if he might be getting ready to fire a cannon on the Fourth of July. “You have heard the ordinance. Do I hear a motion for its adoption?”

Councilman Utting of the Middle Ward rose gravely: “It is my honor and privilege to move that the ordinance be adopted as read—”

A moment later Mr. Frazier heard a gruff and ponderous “Aye!”

—and his canal was born, all the seven miles of it, and the great mills like those at Lowell and Fall River—

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WHEN HE FELT himself getting a little out of breath George stopped talking and glanced about him. They were halfway up the slope of sidewalk rising up the canalbank to the high arc of the Meigs Memorial Bridge. He could hardly believe it; they must have been walking for thirty minutes or more and almost the only part of it he could remember was what he had been saying. He remembered vaguely passing William Longstreet School but that was the only landmark he could recall,—wandering on and on down the empty sidewalks, oblivious of everything except the soft impalpable comfort of being with her again after so many hours; except the moment of seeing her at last, the image of her permeating his senses in a slow expansion like the taste of a grain of sugar or salt on your tongue; except the moment of touching her hand that was almost like diving into a pool for the change it brought every pore of his skin, feeling the picture of her which his mind had been weaving all the time suddenly pulled up, shifted a little, corrected, as the instructor in drawing might take the pencil and redraw a line here and there,—if it were possible to redraw the warmth in a smile that was gone almost before you saw it, the flowing stream of thought behind eyes, the fleeting details of movement and manner that meant Allen to him as much as her appearance did:

He looked ahead of them up the bank and finished, "But by the time I got the boy there Mr. Utting had gone."

She didn't say anything for a long time, gazing down as she pushed on up the slope, hands behind her. Her silence came as something of a surprise after his extended story; he waited, watching the level yellow light of the low sun blasting into the treetops. The blue shade was thickening under the evergreens, creeping furtively out from beneath a thicket of magnolias at the base of the bank, a

gentle coolness rising with the ground dampness. He could smell the dry autumn scent of leaves burning somewhere.

After a while, minutely worried about he didn't know what, he turned his head and studied the profile of her face. She seemed to feel his eyes, for though she didn't glance at him she smiled slightly and put her arm through his.

Reassured, he went on. "I had half a mind to telephone Mr. Utting at home but I decided to wait until tomorrow. What worries me is, maybe when he saw that extra, why, he just washed his hands of the whole thing—"

"But there must be plenty of lawyers in the city—"

"He's the one we want."

She looked at him seriously for a second. "I don't see why you keep saying 'we.' After all, aren't you just—the innocent bystander?"

"Well,—if there's any such thing—"

"It's his affair, George, not yours."

"I believe if I go with him and explain what happened I can persuade Mr. Utting to help him. Then I can step aside—"

"You got him out of jail, didn't you?" she said with a sort of kindly exasperation. "What more do you have to do?"

"You can't arrest a man for something like that." It sounded stiff and he tried to mitigate it with a smile. "The people won't stand for it. And it's the principle too. If Winn takes the right legal steps—"

She pulled her arm away. "Oh, I'm not interested in 'legal steps' and 'principles' and 'the people' and—"

"Of course you are."

"Of course I'm not!" She glanced at him. In a moment she smiled at his expression and put her hand back beneath his arm. "I'm interested in you and your life. And I'm interested in me. And I'm interested in Jeff and—and maybe two or three other people. After that it all begins to fade out. And fast."

"Everybody's interested first in things nearest to him but after that—"

She laughed with a certain grimness. "There's no 'after that.'" Then her voice became earnest without being solemn. "I'm selfish, George.—My husband died in a sort of public sacrifice. I'm not interested in the public any more. Not one damn little bit."

"Maybe I'm not either but—"

"No, with you it's the principle. I respect you for it but I don't feel that way. I feel if everybody looks after his own interests that's as good a system as if everybody looks after somebody else's. Better, because, the other way, there would be some who had lots of people looking after them and some who didn't have anybody." Her eyes smiled at him in a manner that made him wonder if he wasn't the more adolescent. Then, as if reading his face, she became quickly earnest again: "You're disappointed in me."

"Of course I'm not," he said, adding as if to argue her case with himself. "It's different with you. You've paid for your passage. I'm a sort of stowaway; I'm getting a free ride—"

"Oh, don't talk that way!—You complicate things. You tangle things up. Let them be simple." She spun away from him on the arch of the bridge and lifted her arms in a gesture of freedom, glancing composedly up and down the winding waterway and back to the bronze plate in the center of the bridge rail. She read the words aloud while he stood aside, scarcely hearing them for a gathering mood of destitution. "Dedicated to the memory of Silas Weatherford Meigs, founder and first president of the Meigs Manufacturing Company, chairman of the original Board of Commissioners of the Fredericksburg Canal, President of the Fredericksburg & East Georgia Railroad, Philanthropist, Humanitarian, Christian, who lost his life in the freshet of August 21, 1852, in the heroic attempt to rescue from drowning a humble Negro boatman to whom he owed nothing save—"

She whirled away impulsively and stood in front of him. "Like me the way I am. I can't stand it if you don't like me."

His feeling of destitution vanished, he couldn't help laughing with the sense of his relief. "I like you plenty."

"But I disappointed you."

"Don't be silly. I think you're wonderful."

"Let things be simple. If you want something, that means you need it; if you don't want it you don't need it."

"That's simple enough—"

"If I'm thirsty it means I need water."

"And if you're thirsty on a raft at sea I suppose you reach over and dip yourself a cup of water and drink it—"

"Of course not. It wouldn't taste good."

He laughed at himself for having no answer. "Knowing it wouldn't taste good is foresight, which isn't so simple—"

"Poor Mr. Meigs." She leaned her forearms on the concrete rail. "If he'd minded his own business he might have founded a dozen mills."

"Mr. Dobit calls this bridge Fredericksville's consolation prize." He told her of the canal's being bought in by the Piedmont Public Service Corporation during the depression of the thirties, telling her confidently, as if he really knew something about it; "They gave Fredericksville the bridge to console it for losing the canal,—and now everybody's happy."

He leaned beside her on the bridge rail studying her profile in the weakening sunlight and the trembling at the corner of her mouth where a smile stirred under the surface. "I love you," he said. "I'm afraid to tell you because I may be throwing away all the happiness I already have from just being with you on an all-or-nothing chance—which a young man can easily afford to take but which a person of my—"

He watched her gazing off, suddenly motionless, at the winding band of water sweeping away in a long curve into the sunset and casting back the snow-blue windows of the mills in a pale wrinkled replica. She didn't say anything for some time then she turned her eyes away to the cars coming up the slope, some of them with their lights on. "I have broken into your life, haven't I? Into your full life. Not full of joy maybe, but full of contentment, which is better as a steady thing. My life was empty. So I broke into yours to see what I could take." She looked down into the water. "But that's

not the way it is at all. I'm all mixed up as to the way it really is, but it's not that way."

"You haven't broken into my life," he said almost angrily.

"I like the fact there haven't been very many women in your life." She smiled at him. "That makes you mad, doesn't it?"

"How can you be so sure?"

"Well,—wouldn't your sincerity have been worn down a lot thinner than it is? I like sincerity, your sincerity,—even when it annoys me almost to tears by sending you chasing off all over town—"

"You're sincere too."

"If that's your way of asking have there been many men in my life I can tell you there haven't." She brushed her hand lightly over the back of his and walked away along the rail of the bridge.

She paused at the top of the steps leading down to the old tow-path, then she put her arm through his again and they descended and walked away up the gravel. They met a man in overalls who touched his cap and said, "Evening"; "Good evening," she said. When they met a group of women in loose trousers coming from one of the mills she spoke to them first and there was a quiet chorus of "Evening" in which his own stood out heavily.

After a while she said abruptly, "You know, you mustn't call me any more at the Estes'."

"What!"

"I understand how it is with them. They don't like to have me go out with you like this.—Oh, it isn't just you. They can't help it. They think it's not becoming in Jeff's widow. Maybe they're right; I don't know. I get pretty mixed up about it. All I'm sure of is that being friends with you smoothes things for me—inside. It makes all the difference in the world to me to have someone I can talk to, say things to—that I probably oughtn't to say."

"You can say anything you want to to me. I don't believe you can think of anything I wouldn't understand. I don't know why that should be,—but it is."

She said matter-of-factly, as if merely stating a quiet truth, "I've cried so much there's just no more cry left in me. I had begun to

think there was nothing more of any kind left in me. But now—I know there's something left now; I don't know how much is left but there's something. It's not all you should have, all I'd like to give you, but—"

"Listen. Don't worry about these things. I'd rather be with you than anything in the world. You've done more for me than I can ever do for you. If you're afraid I'll ask more of you than you want to give me—"

"*Can*, darling; that's what I'm trying to say."

"You can be sure I'll never want anything you don't want to give me. Or rather I guess it's more accurate to say I'll never take anything you don't want to give me. I can't control what I want. As you say, if you want something, that means you need it."

She pulled on his arm and as he stopped moved in front of him, put both her arms about his neck and kissed him on the mouth.

His conscious thoughts were dulled under the irresistible sudden sensitizing of his body but when she drew away from him in a moment and walked on with his hand tightly in hers he wondered if this strange tense instant might not have told him more about her than all their hours together. Under the physical softness of it, the kindness, the deep friendliness even, there seemed to be a sort of barrier that divided wish from impulsion and he remembered the July afternoon when he had first seen her and the sense of something like discord in her, light and shade. He wondered if she had been hurt more than he had ever suspected, maybe more than she herself suspected,—wondered, on second thought, walking there toward the upper bridge and the street lights over it pale in the twilight, if it might not be to this hurt he owed her turning to him rather than to someone her age—

"I'm not going to stop calling you just because—"

"Call Jane Cassidy."

The trivial conspiracy suggested a confidence in him that was almost like her walking into his rooms and closing the door behind her. He put his arm round her waist and she held his hand on her side.

"I'm probably the most practical and level-headed woman you ever knew. When I first saw you I wondered if you could really be a meter-reader—"

"Now you know you didn't! I looked every inch a meter-reader."

"I wondered what you did. You see? Not what you were like but what you did. Most men look as if they had come to the end of their rope; you get a feeling you could come back in ten years and there they would still be, at the end of their rope. You didn't seem to be at the end of yours and I wondered what sort of rope it was—"

They rounded an abutment of the upper bridge; when he saw again the filling station below the bank and the upper stories of the old White House rising against the dark sky, smelled again the acid smoke, he seemed to be removed from beside her as rudely as—as if a policeman had arrested him.

There were lights in the station and maybe a dozen men moving about in the glow. Three or four were standing inside the office holding a newspaper that must have been the extra open between them; he saw one man reach a bare forearm across the sheet and jab two or three times at some paragraph—

"I'm going to catch this bus," she said.

"Good Lord, you can't do that. I asked you out to supper—"

"Did you?" she laughed. "I'd forgotten." Then she said seriously, "I told them I'd be home early; I'm going to surprise them.—I've loved being with you."

"But supper—"

"This'll be what Jeff calls an empty supper—"

He saw her face change as he felt her hand grab his arm: "Look at that old man!"

Out of a dirt road just beyond the filling station a little old Negro leaned forward on the seat of a rickety wagon and urged a lean mule at a fast trot into the Broad Street traffic. He swung toward the country, miraculously missing everything, his rear wheels lurching into the trough of the old car tracks and out again.

She released his arm and they looked at each other and laughed.

When they sat down in the bus he took her hand. "Can you ride a bicycle?"

"I can ride with my feet on the handle bars,—though I don't have to."

He asked if she would like to ride up the towpath. "You can ride all the way to the locks.—But it's seven miles."

"It sounds beautiful."

"I've been wanting to do that all my life."

"And never have?"

"One thing and another—"

"Oh, I'm so glad!—You know, I've been more than a little jealous of all these places here, so full of other things in your mind than me. You've been there with other people, other women,—hideous creatures with big feet and rough hands and fat bottoms—"

"Tomorrow afternoon, quarter to three."

She lowered her eyes for a second then raised them. "I'll be at Jane's."

"I could get there at two-thirty except I'll have to go change my clothes—"

"Don't wear these trousers; they're too good."

"I was afraid you hadn't seen them. I bought them Saturday morning. They're the best flannel and if it hadn't been for you I'd have saved five dollars by buying the other pair—"

"Women are so costly!"

→→→←←

MR. SILAS WEATHERFORD MEIGS wondered if he could have been awakened by the extreme quiet. Except for the whispered "tick-tock" of Miss Jerry's clock beneath the glass dome on the mantelpiece there wasn't a sound. Granting it was Sunday and still before day, it seemed unusual there shouldn't be one footfall on the sidewalk brick, one hoof or wheel on the cobblestones.—Or maybe he had waked up simply because he had put his mind on it. He had

sent his family to the Summerville house for the hot weather and the house in town would be quite empty, but it was better to get home before daybreak; the *hoi polloi* would scarcely appreciate the sight of the president of the Meigs Manufacturing Company, with beaver, sideburns and stick—or rather, they would appreciate it too highly—

He swung his bare legs out of bed and felt on the carpet for his patent-leather shoes. There was a little mud still on them from the mired street-crossings after the four-day rains, and the thought occurred to him it might be raining again; a light rain would muffle the outdoor sounds.

But there was no sound of rain in the trees or on the roof, no sound at all, except the clock. He had spent many nights at Miss Jerry's, over the years, but none had ever ended in a daybreak of such utter deadness; if it hadn't been for the clock he might have decided he had gone deaf.

He hooked his suspenders over his naked shoulders and felt his way to the gray window. Then he stopped and put both hands on the sill and stared down into the street, his mouth dropping open, his breathing suddenly halted, hanging there with his shoulders beyond the white window sash, glaring through the imperturbable foliage of the pecan tree and drawing at last a tentative breath again as you might try the taste of an offensive medicine. For there, under the first dim light of this August Sunday in the year 1852, lay Greene Street covered with an even, quiet sheen of Savannah River water. There were no curbstones, no sidewalks; he could see about a foot of Miss Jerry's green cast-iron fence sticking up out of the flood like a fish trap. Before it and behind it, to right and left, up the street and down, the colorless water lay in silent possession. . . .

"To me," said Mr. Meigs, speaking across the bone of Miss Jerry's Porterhouse steak to the bearded Captain Treadway of the United States Army after they had finished a pot of strong and understanding coffee there at the impromptu breakfast table on the upstairs porch, composed again because there was no use to be anything else, through with hunger and thirst and love, returning to the world, "to

me it is unthinkable the South should be forced to remain in the Union at the point of a bayonet.—You've been in the South, sir, before you came to the Arsenal?"

"Oh, yes. My last station was Fort Pulaski at Savannah. I love the South. I love the Southern people,—particularly the women."

"May I offer you a native Georgia cheroot?"

The captain gazed affectionately at the three long twists Mr. Meigs extended to him, said he was delighted and took one. "No, there won't be a war. You hear lots of talk but—why should there be a war?"

"The South has peculiar problems. I don't mean slavery; there's nothing peculiar about that. I mean, for example, being forced by the North more and more into the position of a colony. Of course I understand how every country that expects to amount to anything in the world must have colonies, must keep its lifeline going back in one way or another to the soil and its raw materials; nevertheless you can't expect the colonies to welcome that status if they can avoid it. And if the Thirteen Colonies had the right to secede from the British Empire I don't see how you can deny us the right to secede from the present union."

"If the Colonies had had representation in Parliament—"

"If we hadn't had that excuse, Captain, we'd have invented another. The Colonies were a young and growing community with problems peculiar to themselves; they wanted to go their own way, develop their own individuality. When you come of age, you leave your father's house and strike out for yourself. And a wise parent does not put too many obstacles in the way of your going.—I read law when I was a young man. I spent a good many years, all told, with my feet on my desk waiting for a client to shove open my door. I did a lot of reading and a lot of thinking. It looks to me like no people can ever amount to anything as long as they're in the position of a colony. The colony produces and the mother country processes; and most of the profits go to the processor. So some of us decided a few years ago we'd develop our water power and put up

a mill or two and process our cotton ourselves. Of course the Northern industrialists don't take very kindly to that—”

“I'm a practical man,” said the captain. “Theories are all very well, but you can't have a war without gunpowder. The South has no powder mills. Of course you know that for over a year now your State has been importing gunpowder from Northern mills.”

“Maybe a little for our militia companies—”

“Your new canal here could easily support a powder mill but even if you built one, you have no saltpeter, no niter. You have a fine charcoal in your dogwood trees but the wood needs a three-year seasoning. Don't misunderstand me, sir; I'm just looking at it with the practical eye of a soldier—”

“We have no powder mills,” said Mr. Meigs, “but we have—cotton.” He underscored the word with a look at Captain Treadway, then went on. “What potatoes are to Ireland, cotton is to Lancashire. When we had three short crops in forty-six-seven-and-eight there was commercial distress in Britain as severe as a failure of the corn crop. England's dependent on our cotton; she'll give us powder.”

“I've been told she's already taking steps against a failure from America—”

“Doesn't it strike you Captain, as a little peculiar that the Abolitionists are all hollering practically out of the windows of the New England cotton mills? They didn't mind slavery while there was a good profit in it. It looks like to me what makes them mad is our new factories; they're scared we'll take the cotton mills away from 'em,—after they went to so much trouble to take 'em away from Liverpool—”

The captain shook his head. “That's not in my department. My hope for peace—and the last thing a soldier wants is a war—lies in the fact that war's not feasible for the South. Even if you exchanged your cotton for gunpowder, where would you get men to fire it? Only the people who own slaves would have any reason to fight; the great mass of the people would have nothing to fight for.”

“They would fight for their State; they would fight for independ-

ence, sir, as their grandfathers did in '76. A third of our population is African. When you at the North talk of freeing those blacks and turning them loose to run wild among us, why, every white man in the South will fight you, whether he is a slaveowner or not—”

“But the feasibility of the thing. You've got to raise an army; you've got to supply it with guns and ammunition and food and clothing; you've got to have a currency; you've got to have a postal system;—you've got to build up from the ground everything that the North now has ready made.”

“It would be difficult, but—”

“Speaking as a practical soldier, wouldn't it be impossible?”

“You've overlooked one thing, Captain.” Mr. Meigs drew a long solemn draft of smoke out of his cheroot. “The South has an abundance of one priceless commodity.” He tapped the ash into the saucer of his coffee cup. “I mean leadership. Where there's a led class there's a leader class. We're used to directing; we say to a man, Go, and he goeth. The difficulties you mention can all be solved by the right leaders—”

“Well, I hope they won't have to be,” the captain said with a genial smile. “Because if there was a war, one of us would lose. And it doesn't do to lose a war. Sometimes you don't recover for a hundred years; sometimes you never—what's that thing floating down the middle of the street!”

“That's a bale of cotton,” said Mr. Meigs, “and it's probably mine—”

“There's a boat!”

The captain bounced out of the rocking chair and leaned over past the upright panel of grillwork at a corner of the porch. He whistled through his fingers with what seemed to Mr. Meigs the pressure of a steam engine.

“Good grief, the neighbors, sir!” cried Mr. Meigs, whisking out of his chair and into the house.

“He heard me,” said Captain Treadway unperturbed, beckoning with great circles of his arm.

Mr. Meigs peeped out through the shutters at a Negro in an old

bateau gliding on the current past the base of the Signers' Monument; he saw the man catch sight of the captain, steer the up-ended bow about with a slow sweep of a muddy paddle and head toward them past the top of a hitching post. When he reached the gate he fended off with the paddle blade and flung them up a grin that might have been interpreted as anything from merely polite to roguish.

"What'll you charge to get us out to dry ground?" said the captain, with what Mr. Meigs took to be typical Yankee cheeseparing.

"Don't bargain with him, man!—Bring your boat up to the steps, uncle; we'll be right down."

"Gate won't lemme through. Reckon I'll have to tote you." He wrapped two or three coils of pink chain about the iron spire of the gatepost then hooked a bony shank familiarly over the side and felt for the bottom with his toes; when he stood up against the current the water came halfway up his thigh.

Mr. Meigs frowned at what was evidently in store for him but seeing no way out of it, he got his beaver and his walking stick, found Miss Jerry and gave her an affectionate pinch on the seat. At the front steps he motioned graciously to the captain; "After you, sir."

"Please," said the captain.

"I insist—"

"I beg of you—"

"Good grief, let's get out of here!" Mr. Meigs pushed the beaver down firmly on his head, put what was left of the cheroot in his teeth, grasped his stick by the middle, looped up the tails of his frock coat and eased himself gingerly into the saddle of the Negro's back. "Mind yourself now, uncle; I've had trouble enough for one Sunday."

He looked down at the yellow waters closing behind him like night and tried to lift his patent-leather shoes a little higher, conscious, however, that whether or not his shoes got wet was small potatoes in comparison with whether or not he might, in a minute or two, be threshing about on Miss Jerry's brick walk peering up into the

freshet from the inside. He held his breath and, when he recalled that there was probably already a film of slippery mud deposited over the bricks, he began moving his lips soundlessly through the first part of the Lord's Prayer.

By the time he reached "the power and the glory" they were moving between the gateposts out into the current, the batteau scratching and bumping against the fence. He took two or three quick drafts on the cheroot, which had nearly gone out, looking forward to the fact that in two or three seconds now he would be sitting safely in the boat getting ready to enjoy to the full the Yankee's crossing. He could almost put his hand on the wet bow. "For ever and ever—"

He leaned over and grabbed at the side of the boat. His shoes went under and, kicking them out vigorously, he felt the tepid water rise about the seat of his trousers. He responded with a jump and everything immediately dissolved into a heavy clay-colored wetness; he opened his mouth to yell but the water plunged into his throat. In a panic he tried to fling his legs away from round the Negro's waist, but he couldn't get them free and they rolled together, he and the boatman, over and over down the sidewalk, the base of the iron spikes of the fence whirling past his head through a dense brown fog, the black corner post coming at him out of nowhere like a club and smashing against his left temple—



THE LONG WALLS of bright-eyed mill windows, like one of those postcards you held to a lamp, cast a dim sort of starlike glow over the canalbank and the stumps in the field as the sun went down that Wanzo thought at first was just an additional blessing. Without them there would have been hardly enough light to dig by and he would have had to go on home without getting much done.

Because he had got there a little late. When he had looked up and down Broad Street and, in a break in the traffic, held out his hand and pulled the wagon in a flurry of hoofbeats across the concrete and into the dirt road by the filling station, it had been only a

half-hour or so before first dark. He laid his coat on the bed of the wagon and started digging, round and round the stump, night coming slowly on but the mill windows polishing up for him shinier and shinier like a hundred little moons.

Last night, in the middle of the night, when the screech owl commenced crying he had begun to think his luck was changing. But he had reached out of bed and got hold of his shoe and turned it over and pointed the toe at the church, and sure enough, in a few minutes, the screech owl went away. He really felt all right about it but, to make sure, he got up early in the morning to see if he could catch a mole; if you caught a mole before the hen got off the roost and squeezed him to death in your hands you got a power over risings, and a stump was kind of a rising. He couldn't find a mole, but still everything seemed all right,—more than all right—

By the time he had got down about a foot there was hardly light enough left to see the bottom of the hole, but he wanted to keep on digging as long as he could. A few minutes now and a few minutes then and the first thing he knew old stump would be rolling out of the wagon by his doorstep with a big foot-shivering "k-r-rum-m!" Then he would be ready for cold,—with the rich red slabs you could split off, heavy as strips of brass and so full of rosin they would just about reach out and grab at the flame of a match if you even held it close, just about reach in your pants pocket and get the match for themselves, and then burn like a runaway mule, with the thick black smoke and the bubbles that fluttered like a partridge getting up in the next field when you could barely hear him and the smell that made him think of all the million-and-one fires he had ever started with a lightwood splinter. And not only that, but a dozen or so of these splinters wrapped up with a piece of baling wire were worth a nickel to Mr. Utting, six for a quarter—

When he struck the first root too big to cut with the shovel he cleared the dirt away from each side of it and got the axe out of the wagon. He spit in his left hand; the night air was getting cool in the bottom and when your hands were calloused and cool too it

was hard to hold on to an axe-handle unless your left hand was wet—

He swung the axe over his head and “whump!” into the root. Then with two or three tight little squeaks he worked the blade free and swung it again, the sharp sticky smell of the rosin spurting up out of the cut as if it had been waiting there trying to get loose for a hundred years. When you started messing round with an old root you were going back to somebody else’s time, not yours; you were messing round with something didn’t belong to you,—messing round with dead folks’ things—

And right then was when he happened to look across the top of the stump at the gray mule, Edna, standing there tied to the wagon wheel in the blue glow of the mill windows, and he saw she was almost exactly the color of a cake of ice. For a minute he stood there in the hole, leaning on the axe-handle, looking at her, or rather looking at the color of her. He thought she looked almost as if she were made out of bone, and it occurred to him all of a sudden he had been meaning to go home for a long time: his feet were cold from standing in the damp subsoil and there was a sharp breeze beginning to curl down the side of the canalbank that made goose-pimples on his arms. There was something bothersome about wind in the dark.—“I don’ mind it rain,—I don’ mind it snow,— But do, Lord! make the wind don’t blow—”

He scrambled out of the hole on his knees, picked up the mattock, the spade and the axe and tumbled them over the tailgate of the wagon. He would come back in the daytime; you could do a heap better job in the daytime—

He rammed his arms into his coat sleeves, fastened it over his chest with a safety pin, hitched up Edna and smacked her over the haunches with the ends of the plowline.

When he rolled out on to the solid concrete of Broad Street and whipped round west toward the country the street lights were burning cheerfully. But there was a solemn and spine-shaking hymn curling like steam out of the White House Mission: “Now the day is over, Night is—”

### THREE

*Partly cloudy this afternoon; possibly showers tonight or early Wednesday . . .*

**A**T SEVEN-THIRTY his alarm clock snatched him rudely out of sound sleep. He shut it off and lay there for a minute in the colorless candlelight of daybreak, fighting to hold his eyes open, fumbling to gather up his mental belongings of yesterday like a boy scratching together what had rolled out of his pocket in a jump off a backyard fence,—test papers, textbooks, “the unteachable third,” something about the Constitution of Georgia, Jim’s diminutive V-mail handwriting, “we folded up our mortars and were waiting for the time to advance,”—waiting for the time to advance—

But there was something else,—more important than all that,—lying right there in front of his eyes, something that made all those things different from before—Allen!

He popped upright in bed gazing at the pearl window foggy without his spectacles. She should have been his first thought. Was he so ancient love came second? Flooding his mind like the daybreak, but tardily; awakening every nerve point of his body that had ever touched her, but sleepily—

And yet there had been something else too. Something watching him now, like the answer to a question he knew but couldn’t find,—in some old schoolroom when he was a boy—the teacher rattling two pieces of chalk between his palms—hands wiggling in the air all about him—

Winn! And all the innumerable details of the thing loosed in a downpour over his brain.

He reached with a swift tenderness for his glasses on the table by the clock, hooked them in a sweep on his ears and stepped barefooted onto the cool cement of his porch. Then he remembered it was too early for the paper and he stood there for a second in the soft coolness looking off at the rusty leaves of the poplar tree beginning to glow against the east sky like a parchment shade. Beneath the continuous shimmering chitter of the birds he thought he heard the almost unhearably thin whine of a kitten; he glanced about the steps, partly for the kitten, partly on a chance the paper had come after all, but he saw neither. He went inside and got dressed.

He didn't expect the paper to show any new developments so quickly; but if nothing more had developed he wanted to know that too. Of course what he really wanted to know was how the incident was being presented to the people; because they would respond, wouldn't they? not to the incident but to the presentation—

It was all perfectly clear again. The whole thing hinged now on whether he and Winn could make their peace with Mr. Utting and on whether the people would support Winn in whatever course Mr. Utting decided was best. As to the first, he would just have to call Mr. Utting, maybe at the short recess, and see if he would talk to them; annoyed though he may have been, he was a big enough man not to let that stand in the way at a time such as this.

As to the second, George thought he was in a unique position to know how the people were responding, he the invisible guest at forty-six breakfast tables this morning. They wouldn't tell him what their parents had said, might not even be conscious they knew, but if he mentioned it to them and they responded he thought he could be sure there had been response at home; and if there had been response at these breakfast tables, why not at all the breakfast tables in Fredericksville—

He went to the bookcase beside the south window and ran his finger along the spines of Georgia histories. There was something in the Constitution of Georgia about—Treadway and Bruce, *Civics*

*for Young Georgians.* He took the book down, opened it to Appendix A. There it was: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons—"

He heard the thump of the newspaper as the little cube struck the driveway and skated grittily over the concrete. He stuffed the book hurriedly into his briefcase, slipped the knot of his tie against the button of his fresh shirt and stepped out into the long sunlight shining against the bottoms of the leaves.

#### U.S. BOMBERS STRIKE WILHELMSHAVEN NIPS LOSE 3 DESTROYERS—

He had heard all that last night on the radio; he skipped to the secondary headline beneath, which ran across four columns:

#### BUDEN HAS 'NO APOLOGIES' FOR ARREST OF JACK WINN

He let his eye run down the middle of the column; the account seemed to be substantially the same as the other except the reporters had had time to talk to Buden. He took the paper to the dining room, propped it against the cut-glass vase of pine needles and read the details, while his breakfast got cold and the long hands of his watch beside his plate raced on into the twelve minutes that was the distance to the classroom.

... Mr. Buden said he quashed the case at the request of Mr. Persons Heath ... "I understood from Mr. Heath Winn was very apologetic about his disorderly conduct and for cursing in the presence of ladies ... no right to say the things about me ... but the arrest was made because he used profane language and created a public disturbance ... thought he had had enough," Mr. Buden said, "but if he hasn't I'll put the case back on the docket."

Authorities at police barracks ... late hour last night ... documents in the case ... in a pending file and that Winn might yet be brought to trial ... \$52 cash bond ... routine refund procedure if no further action ... Mr. Buden said yesterday he thought the matter was ended when he agreed to quash the charges. "I want to say, though, I have no apology to make for . . ."

The last bell was ringing as he reached the foot of the steps and he broke into a run. In the long corridor he saw Harry Hall and Rutherford hurrying into their classrooms with the newspaper under their arms.

George stood by his desk, out of breath, while his newly washed young ladies and gentlemen subsided into quiet like echoes dying away. He wondered if there was really something different in their attitude today. Or was he imagining it? He couldn't decide.

He took off his glasses and began polishing them slowly with the pleasant glassiness of a fresh handkerchief, breathing in deeply with some idea he had got from he didn't know where that a few full breaths after you had been running would bring you back to normal. Of course if he said anything about the incident some would mention at home he had brought it up. And some living rooms were certainly going to say "teachers got no business meddling in politics"; he could hear the words. And tomorrow or the next day Miss Saggus would hand him a note Mr. Crumbley would like to see him—

But it was important these young people should know; as important as some things in the history text. They were young; maybe they wouldn't be interested; but—well, America was the people, wasn't it? Georgia would rise or decline according, in the last analysis, to the quality of the people. They played their part willy-nilly; their indifference was just as potent for their future as their interest. The newspapers were presenting the case to the people, to the American jury; it was simple and easily understood and they were going to decide it: indifference would produce just as final a verdict as interest.—All right, roll the dice. What was Fredericksville thinking this morning? Yes or no?

He held his glasses up against the window light. "I hope you have all read the American history in this morning's newspaper—"

"Yes, sir—"

"Yeah—"

"They got no right—"

"Y'ought to heard my pappy—"

They all laughed a little at the spontaneity of it. His own smile, he knew, must have shown his satisfaction: the jury was listening then.

He hooked his glasses over his ears and quietly took the civics book out of the briefcase. He opened it, looking out over their heads. "Before we rush on to less important matters let me read you a few paragraphs. They are from the Constitution of the State of Georgia. Listen carefully now because these words deserve your respect. They didn't just float down upon you one day like manna from heaven. The people of Georgia built this thing themselves, this Constitution. They rolled up their sleeves and put it together themselves. You've seen Tybee Light. This is a kind of Tybee Light,—set up here to mark the channel we intend to sail in.—'The rights of the people,' says the Constitution, 'to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated; and no warrant shall issue except upon probable cause supported by oath or affirmation particularly describing the place or places to be searched and the persons to be seized.'"

He lifted his eyes for a moment to the back wall and suddenly realized he was gazing at the half-unrolled map of the South Pacific where he showed them from time to time the pin points on which their fathers and older brothers and cousins dreamed of Fredericksville. He went on, moving his finger to another paragraph: "'Every person charged with an offense against the laws of this state shall have the privilege and benefit of counsel; shall be furnished, on demand, with a copy of the accusation and a list of the witnesses on whose testimony the charge against him is founded; shall be confronted with the witnesses testifying against him; and shall have a proper and speedy trial by an impartial jury.'"

He drew his finger down to a footnote at the bottom of the page. "Now one paragraph from the laws we have made for ourselves interpreting the Constitution. The laws are like the bell-buoys leading in from Tybee Light—'An arrest for a crime may be made by an officer either under a warrant or without a warrant if the

offense is committed in his presence, or the offender is endeavoring to escape, or for other cause there is likely to be a failure of justice for want of an officer to issue the warrant.’’ He closed the book with a little pop and laid it to one side on the briefcase.

“Now,” he continued, not wanting to discuss it any further, being an old enough hand at this game to be prepared for a great simulated interest whose object was merely to postpone the showdown on the day’s assignment. “Now, not to get too far ahead of our story, let’s go back to the British Parliament and a revenue-producing bill called the Stamp Act. You remember there was an even more important purpose behind it than to produce revenue. Tell us what that purpose, that principle, was,—Jenree.”

He was looking out over the boy’s bristling black hair, hearing him above a continuous undercurrent of his own thoughts whispering, “The jury is listening,” when he saw the classroom door open quietly and Miss Saggus tiptoe in with a slip of paper in her hand. She laid it coldly on a corner of the desk and went out.

“Go on,” he told Jenree, who had stopped, apparently hoping against hope this might be a message calling the whole thing off.

George slipped the paper softly in front of him, not seeing how Mr. Crumbley could possibly have implemented a disapproval so quickly but half believing it had happened. He glanced down at it without moving his head: “Call Miss Hite Monument-2136. Important.” He raised his eyes to Jenree, floundering on. He didn’t know any “Miss Hite.” He wondered if it could possibly be an error: “Mrs. Estes?” Or had Allen sent him the message in fun—

When the bell rang for the short recess he hurried to the faculty room, the slip in one hand, fingering in his pocket for a nickel with the other. He dialled MO-2136. The voice of a young woman answered promptly, repeating the number with a pleasant nonchalance.

“This is George Cliatt. I have a message here to call—”

“Oh, Mr. Cliatt! We’ve been trying to get you. Mr. Utting will see you at three.”

“At three—at three o’clock—yes—” He couldn’t help stammering

in his surprise, in his relief that Mr. Utting hadn't washed his hands of it after all, that now he wouldn't have to call Mr. Utting and beg—

"Can you tell me where to find Mr. Jack Winn, Mr. Cliatt? He doesn't seem to be in the book."

He thumbed through the pages of the telephone book and gave her the number of the filling station. She repeated, "Canal seven-one-two-seven. Thank you, Mr. Cliatt," and hung up.

He stood there leaning against the side of the booth, a growing exhilaration in his heart: the jury was listening; the lawyer was ready to go ahead. Freedom meant something in Fredericksville as well as in the Solomon Islands and over Wilhelmshaven—and over Munda; among the white shirts as well as among the khaki—

|||||

CORPORAL J. ZACK HALL leaned his empty gray sleeve against the tailboard of one of the spindly black buggies, gazing between the fuzzy trunks of the old cedars at the gate of the churchyard through which she must come any minute now, slim, erect, moving with an earnest dignity in her full skirts that would make him want to smile as you might smile at the gravity of a kitten or of a boy playing soldier,—the words of the plaintive hymn soaring on the buoyant women-voices through the open windows out into the autumn sun-and-shade of the yard with the russet leaves falling among the group of men by the church door, talking, waiting for the preaching to begin as you waited for the women to set the table, talking through the hymn, through the munching of the horses at the feedboxes, through the shuffling back and forth of the freight engine beyond the wall,—talking about he didn't know what. Or really care; probably about Antietam, Lee, their sons in Virginia, the two long years of it and victory hardly any closer—

"... can't blame a man for that. Why sell your corn this week for three dollars when next week you'll get three and a quarter."

"If the Confederate government don't take it tomorrow for a dollar! . . ."

He wondered if he was leaning against the buggy to hide the empty sleeve. Why should he? Hadn't she nursed him in the humid tent?—propping him up against the head of the cot to look out beneath the rolled-up sides at the Academy boys with their wooden guns drilling to the deep roll of the drum; reading to him while his thoughts wandered to her hands and face and body, his ears listening to the drumnote so charged for him with sights and sounds and smells. She knew his arm was gone—

"Amos lost a thousand dollars by one seizure. Just because he had the meat. If he'd had sense enough to raise cotton the seizer wouldn'a bothered him."

"I say they got no right to impress a man's property; it's liberty we're fighting for—"

"You better support the Army. Don't, the Yankees'll show you another kind of impressment. A man puts his life in peril for eleven dollars a month and people complain if they have to furnish him bread below the market. What's a few dollars profit if next spring a Lincoln army overruns the State—"

He was lucky to have one arm left. Many a better man had lost more than an arm. Why should he want to hide it, now that he was up and about, through with war,—or rather, war through with him? Why wasn't he proud of it? He had given an arm for his country,—for his countrymen—

" . . . leather selling at four dollars; government offers you one. Three dollars for shoes selling at eighteen . . ."

He could still curl his new black moustache. He could hold her as close against his lonesomeness with one arm as many a man with two. Love was more than a man's arms.—Wasn't it?

" . . . some of these agents, two years ago, warn't worth the coat on their back; now they're dealers in land and slaves. It ain't liberty when your property's yours only at the pleasure of one of these—"

"—certified claim on the government and I go in the Quartermaster's office and first thing I see's a big sign: NO FUNDS."

“—six hundred thousand bushels of government corn out in the weather on a siding. Saw it with my own eyes; felt it with my own two hands . . .”

She was already late. Maybe she wasn’t coming to church at all. She hadn’t exactly said she would. Just, “Doctor Dobit says you can go to church Sunday.” Looking up at her, searching for a response, “What church?” grinning a little. “Oh, there’re lots of churches in Fredericksville,” in a tone that might have meant stepping back from him just the slightest bit. “What church do you go to, Miss Sarah?” “Oh, we go to Saint Paul’s, the one on the river where the old fort was. But there’re lots of churches in—”

Maybe she wasn’t coming. Maybe she was afraid it would be different now, with him on his feet and not just a hospital case, not asking now for down-slanted mercy but for something else, face to face, not looking down at him but up. He had had a dream of peach trees in Middle Georgia blooming with the pink-and-white of a parasol, gathering the peaches, flesh-colored and warm under the fingers of both his hands, while she became a girl he had known before his company of Clinch Rifles had gone to Richmond in their white parade belts, standing beneath him under the tree, the neck-line of her dress pouting outward with her arms up waiting to catch—under both his hands—

“. . . you lock up your corncribs and smokehouses until it’s a grave doubt if the army of General Bragg can be maintained—”

“If the government wants your corn let it pay the market . . .”

The voices trailed off into a reverent silence and he became aware of the deep and lonesome prayer from the resounding cavern of the church: “Be with our gallant armies, Lord, in the field of battle—”

It was always a “field.” Not a ditch or a mountain side or a swamp or a town—we formed in line of battle right at the large hotel which was burning rapidly, the Yankees had filled it with ammunition and fired it in their retreat—or a pine barren hideous with the wild yells, with the short ejaculation he heard almost every moment as a ball lodged with a dull thud in a man’s body, as a shell or grape tore away an arm or a leg,—lying there on the white

gritty sand among the Virginia blackjacks, twisting and turning, unable to keep still, trying to prop what was left of the arm against a scrub-oak stump, trying to stifle the moans that broke through his teeth, as unstanchable as the thick blood rising out of his arm. Then, leaden-eyed, looking up out of unmeasurable depths at the sunlight screening through the rain-and-soot-stained windows of the hospital train, the quiet voices of Richmond, wrapped in summer sounds and the hot sighing of a locomotive, coming down to him in his deep well where he lay as if in hiding, beyond prayer, beyond the reach of Christ, beyond caring for life or death. Then, in the aisle beside him, a young woman with eyes as black as Georgia bullaces, gazing down to him not out of pity but out of a fullness of life and challenge, standing there above him in a summer dress tight across the chest,—and an ember of life inside him beginning to glow as when you blew into the ashes of an old fire in the early January dark—

The words of the prayer were wiped out by the determined shuffling of the locomotive beyond the churchyard wall. He watched the great funnel of its smokestack sliding along the top coping of the brick, heading for the bridge, for Richmond and the North, through the low hills and the pine barrens,—freight cars sealed at the powder works on the canal, each one lettered in red, BEWARE: EXPLOSIVES,—through the opium-laden poppy fields, the fields of mercy—

He waited until the last car had rolled by, gathering speed, the engine blowing up puffs of sparks into the bridge girders; then he glanced again at the churchyard gate with the yellow leaves falling, turned and followed the men on tiptoe up the steps—



GEORGE WALKED OUT into Oglethorpe Street under the grapefruit-yellow leaves of the ginkgo trees and stared impatiently up the hill toward the Arsenal for the first red sparkle of the bus. He had been

hurrying every second since the last bell,—having to wait at his desk after class and talk to three or four of them about the thing, standing on one foot then the other, gratified and reassured at their interest and yet ready to damn it, breaking away at last and calling Winn to be sure he had got the message, then picking up Harry Hall's hat and starting down the hall with it. He stood at the soda fountain of the College Ph'cy and gulped a dry sandwich and a paper cup of milk, his hat on the back of his head, briefcase between his feet, his eyes moving between the clock over the mirror and the street outside where he was sure his bus, any second now, would go loping by. But when he rushed out to the curb it was still just twenty minutes to three; he could make it,—if he could just wish the bus over the hill—

He saw a bright thread of color through the leaves and there it was,—with the cloudy white letters on its forehead that would clear in a moment to "MONUMENT" or "COURTHOUSE," it didn't matter which; and he was going to be on time again. And was going to have a quarter-hour on the bus to sit undisturbed, uninterrupted, and catch his breath, figuratively and literally; to consider how impossible it seemed the boy could have been arrested only yesterday,—how impossible it could be only four days ago her hand had reached out to him, the drowsy and recumbent Adam, empty hand dangling over his knee, and the spark of electric life in Jehovah's extended finger, pale in the heat of a Roman summer—

At quarter to three they were going for a bicycle ride up the canalbank!

He looked at the bus beyond his raised finger and closed his hand into a tight fist. What in the world had come over him! Let the bus pass. Let Winn go talk to the lawyer alone; it was Winn's affair. Nobody could expect a man to put something like that ahead of his own personal interests—

The air brakes on the bus hissed in a pleasant pattern and the doors folded into nothing before him. Maybe he could meet Winn, introduce him to Mr. Utting and leave them. He would be a little late meeting her, but—. The truth was he would be very late. The

truth was he would have to do one or the other. And do it quick—

He got on the bus, nodded to Mark, the driver, and dropped a nickel in the coin slot. His father used to speak to the motorman, climbing on to the front bench of the open car, steadying the stiff straw hat, dropping two coins into the conductor's appalling claw, the motorman with a bulge in his cheek, looking back, his hand on the tobacco bag over the knob of the brake lever, the wooden benches crowded,—with people believing more in God than in "the people." You pinned your faith now, not on the force but on the evidence of the force, a turning away from the soul to the body, a seeing-is-believing turn; it was a faith of the eyes now, not of the heart, as a young man's dreams change with his years.—Would he have decided, ten years ago, to spend the afternoon in a lawyer's office instead of—

He would call her from town. "I just plain forgot it, that's all." Good Lord, you couldn't tell a girl that! He didn't know what he was going to tell her. I'm sorry; I don't know what happened; these other things pouring into my mind all morning—"In explaining a thing to your classes, gentlemen, you will find you are more convincing if you first understand it yourself." Maybe the explanation was simply he was too old for love, too old to accept the isolation of it, too old to—maybe he was just a fool—

Behind him he heard the words "Mr. Jack Winn," and he felt his neck muscles suddenly stiffen.

"Mr. Jack Winn's no friend of mine. But I say if they can pick him up for saying something they don't like they can arrest me too, brother."

Another voice mumbled, "Gospel truth."

"And you too."

He wanted to turn round in his seat and look at them; but who they were didn't matter to him as much as what they were saying, as that they were saying it—

"They can ride up to your front door any time the day or night and tell you to get in the wagon.—I don't like it, brother."

George couldn't resist saying over his shoulder, "I don't like it

either." The two men stared at him for a second speechless and he apologized by saying he couldn't help overhearing them.

But he didn't hear anything else they said. He moved over in his seat to make room for a boy in uniform who sat down slowly with the help of a heavy walking stick, put both hands on his leg and moved it as far out of the aisle as he could.

He was glad he had decided as he had, glad Winn had got to the newspapers before he could stop him. Let the people know about it. Let them talk, let them say what they wanted to do. Of course Mr. Utting was probably right that publicity created difficulties for a client before a jury, but this was a special case. This was an offense against the people; the newspapers were just explaining the offense to them.

Give the people the facts and they would reach a right decision; all day he had been seeing that happen. And what reassurance it was! He would have liked to call Mr. Dobit: "I just wanted to make sure, sir, you were chewing your words well today." You had faith in the people as you had faith in the soil; there was no way round it. It was good soil and if the seed was right the plant was right. Of course you did need a few other things too; you needed sun and rain—and a little cultivation at the right time—and a good spraying to kill the parasites—and a fence to keep out the livestock—and somebody to watch over it—and somebody to harvest it—

He turned away to the window: maybe the soil wasn't a good analogy.

The trouble was not with the people, or with the facts; the trouble was in getting the facts to the people. With the best of intentions, it was next to impossible to pass facts on to another uncolored; if the intentions weren't quite so good the coloring became more influential than the facts themselves. The people had so few primary experiences; they had to get nearly all their facts in translation. It was true in America the people were free to choose between several translations; they could choose their newspapers, their radio programs, their movies,—but that was merely like being free to choose between Pope's Homer and Chapman's and Butcher and

Lang's, and about all you could be sure of was you still didn't know how you would feel about Homer—

He felt the slight jar of the bus driver's shifting into another gear to climb the arc of the Meigs Memorial Bridge,—where he had stood with her arm beneath his, the whole side of her body pouring its strong warm current—

The core of unhappiness inside him was almost anger, except there was no one at whom to direct it. It was nobody's fault he had had to choose as he had; if he had to make another choice tomorrow, having done what he could for Winn, his conscience would be appeased and he could choose differently. She would understand. Many girls wouldn't but she would. They would go another day, maybe tomorrow, maybe Saturday; he could go for all day Saturday—

He watched the tapering four-sided chimney of the old powder mill rising up over the trees from beyond the other bridge. They would sit on the canalbank in the sun and read the inscription: "This chimney was erected by the Government of the Confederate States of America—"

Where's our ammunition to come from? Seize a few guns and cartridges in the Federal arsenals? Capture a few kegs of powder on the battlefield? Raise cotton and exchange it in Europe? Through a blockade? There's a canal, gentlemen, at Fredericksburg, Georgia, and water power.—And in a few months the rollers were turning and the acrid and rather agreeable odor of saltpeter and charcoal and niter was hovering like a mist over the banks and the waiting freight cars and the waiting cartridge-makers and the waiting militia companies in their dress caps and white parade belts—

Winn was sitting on the granite base of the monument evidently watching the door of every bus. He stood up when he saw George, popped a palmful of salted peanuts into his mouth and brushed his hands across each other. "Good night, P'fessor! I was scaring you weren't gonna get here."

George told him he had to make a telephone call, said, "Won't

take a second" when he saw the distress on Winn's face and set out across the street to Mr. Jenree's little secondhand bookstore near a corner of the Range. Mr. Jenree nodded his dusty spectacles at a crevice between two overflowing stacks when George asked if he could borrow his phone.

George found "Cassidy, Lt. Tilton P." in the telephone book and called the number. An un-Southern voice answered.

"Would you give a message to Mrs. Estes—"

"Wait a minute; she's right here."

He leaned against the wall gazing absent-mindedly at the flat case of Indian relics in which Mr. Jenree offered some of his number-two finds to the unwary.

Then her voice said "Hello," in her peculiarly tactile tone that was almost like laying the words against his ear.

"I've got myself in a jam," he said, as softly into the mouthpiece as he could. "We've got to go see the lawyer and I can't get there until later." He was terribly sorry, he would explain when he saw her; when there was a pause and she didn't say anything he stammered something about calling her from a bookstore. After a moment she said "All right, George," and he repeated most of what he had already said, not knowing whether it was "all right" or all wrong. "You're not mad with me, are you?"

"That depends on what you're about to get yourself into."

He smiled; she wasn't angry.—He told her not to worry about that, said he would see her later and squeezed sideways out of the shop, feeling better. Winn was waiting impatiently, gazing through Mr. Jenree's nearly opaque window at a dusty display of tomahawks and warclubs and spear-points, his khaki shirt and trousers, except for the bow tie and the black belt, casting over him a sort of shadow of what was ahead; "We're late already, P'fessor—"

He was sorry the boy seemed so dependent on him; he was willing to help him but he wanted it to be a diminishing help. He had his own one life to lead. If Mr. Utting was ready to go ahead, George could reasonably begin to withdraw; but—what if Mr. Ut-

ting was calling them in to say, after what had happened about the newspapers, he would have nothing to do with the case—

|||||

WHEN MR. QUINTARD, a few minutes after four, got back to the *Sentinel & Constitutional* office from dinner it was so dark in the room that he lighted a taper at the coal fire and held it up to find the gas jet over his desk, some drops of the cold November rain running up his arm under his stiff white cuff. He turned the key absent-mindedly and held the flame to the burner, his mind on whether or not he should write an editorial on the piece of information he had just picked up at the Planters Hotel when he stopped in to glance through the register of new arrivals; the information disturbed him out of all proportion to its weight but the question was whether it was wise to disturb the people: a shopkeeper, whom his friend wouldn't name, had that morning refused to accept Confederate currency. In this third year of their great struggle somebody had given up hope—

He realized he was rubbing the taper back and forth over the burner and there was no responding "pop," no sudden little blue-and white fan of light; then he remembered the notice he had carried in the paper a few days before: "In consequence of our inability to get transportation for the kind of wood from which alone Gas can be made—"

He blew out the taper, muttering at the Gas Light Company; there was plenty of lightwood in the country, plenty of niggers to haul it; the niggers hadn't gone to war. He hollered down the hall for Luke to bring him a lamp.

He didn't like to write his editorials in lamplight; they tended to become moody and this was no time to encourage the people in moodiness. Now was the time to write cheerfully,—with Lincoln's soldiers in Vicksburg and Port Hudson, with General Lee, as the telegraph dispatches had it, "conducting a retrograde movement,"

with the Yankees even holding a small island in front of Charleston, with trouble brewing round Missionary Ridge, if you read between the lines. With three boys up there somewhere, Jo turning eighteen in January—

"In writing your friends in the Army, write cheerfully." If he had published that once he had published it a dozen times. And it was counsel he had heeded too; if gloomy letters from home could make a man desert—and they could, had, many times—gloomy editorials to the people at home could make them despair—

"Set it right there, Luke." He fumbled with the wick while the Negro shook up the fire. On top of the papers on his desk was the copy for an advertisement that had come while he was out: "*Wanted* at the Confederate States Clothing Depot, six good tailors to cut army clothing. *Gold wages given.*"—Gold wages given; there it was again.

He picked up the pen and started writing, his lips moving under his gray moustache in a sort of sympathy with his finger muscles, the rain whisking against the window, the rocking chair squeaking as he moved: We must strengthen ourselves—to bear reverses but—we may be assured that—the gigantic efforts of Lincolndom—must soon—end in exhaustion. His army has been depleted by death—and desertions—and expirations of terms of enlistment,—peace meetings at the North are attended—by thousands. When we compare our—situation—with that of the spring—we have much cause—for congratulation and—encouragement. With our great victory at Chickamauga Creek—the backbone of—the anaconda—is—crushed—Scratching out his illegible scrawl that old Farr would squint at while the hard black points of his fingers dived with a dry rattle, unwatched, into the type-boxes—

Independence could not be maintained, as it couldn't have been won in '76, unless the armies were supported by public opinion. Fifty-nine was too old to fight, or so they said, but he could fight at home; the *Sentinel & Constitutional* could milk public opinion as the powder works could mill the powder.—Or could it? His three boys in Tennessee could tell the difference if the powder wasn't

right but they would rather have a blanket or a good strip of carpet than public opinion—

He walked to the fireplace, picked up the poker and stood with it in his hand. Of course the boys wouldn't get the damn crumb-cloth, but somebody would,—seating himself in the armchair at the head of the breakfast table when everybody was down, folding his hands on the plate, "Lord, make us thankful for these and all Thy mercies," the rest of it mumbled, not from any disdain of the okra seeds parched for coffee and all the rest, but from long habit and the words being as familiar to everyone else as himself. Then in a brighter voice, like leaving the depression of church, "Frost this morning." It would be more than frost in Tennessee. He could have slept quite comfortably last night if he hadn't started thinking of Tennessee and the white mists packed round the bottoms of the mountains and the young men shivering on the ground; he had sent their carpets but, there in the middle of the night, another idea occurred to him. Remembering it then, as he slipped his napkin from the silver ring, shook it out and tucked a corner between the middle buttons of his patterned waistcoat, he lifted an end of the tablecloth and ran his palm over the soft heavy weave of the cloth beneath. "First thing this morning I want to send this crumb-cloth to the Army." His wife looking at him in dismay; "But what would they do with my crumb-cloth?" And he muttering impatiently, "It's cold in Tennessee,"—and the God-damned British changing their minds about the war and helping to saw the Confederacy off on a limb, thinking now the end of slavery would raise the cost of American cotton and make it profitable for India to grow it—and deliver Great Britain from dangerous dependence on a foreign country—

He broke the coal with two or three hard jabs of the poker and sat down again to the editorial.—What was public opinion anyhow? Unless it was a sort of God-sent flash of mass inspiration it had its cause like everything else. If you guided people in what they saw and heard and read, you guided what they thought. Which, to all intents and purposes, narrowed public opinion down to the opin-

ions of the guides; lifted it off the broad base of the public and put it on a smaller base,—and the smaller the base, the greater the chance of evil. It was all right with a guide like Jackson, but suppose this fellow who had refused Confederate currency tried to guide public opinion—

He picked up the copy for the advertisement, struck out the words "Gold wages given," and slapped the button of a bell on his desk. "Give this to Farr. Tell him to print it like I've got it marked."

Nowadays with the magnetic telegraph and modern printing machines, channels of information were getting more important than the original facts. If the Yankees captured the telegraph lines out of Chattanooga and started sending dispatches that Bragg had surrendered, people would act as if Bragg really had surrendered. It put a new meaning on "popular government"; a man was entitled to "vote his own opinion," but the chances were it wasn't his own opinion at all. And even the times when public opinion was more or less uninfluenced, what did it do? He wasn't seen often enough at church and it labelled him godless; he was seen yesterday talking to the prisoners and this morning two unsigned letters labelled him Yankee sympathizer,—as if Linsley were trying to sell you a coat that was not much too long in the sleeves but way too big in the chest—

Watching the black funnel of the locomotive moving beyond the heads of the scattered crowd as it backed the cars into the siding, unable to see the prisoners but knowing what they would look like,—bearded faces appearing older than they were, from the beards but also from the aging of battle, solemn faces most of them, sometimes scowling but usually with more of a dull curiosity than hatred, the blue kepis perched at all angles of jauntiness and defiance and don't-care. Four hundred of them had come through a few weeks ago, on the way to Richmond to be exchanged, the orange mud of Chickamauga still crusted on their boots and on the shapeless tubes of their trousers as they strolled up and down the platform of the freight depot eating the hardtack and the sweet potatoes and the cornmeal cakes, gulping the water. He had seen a few of them later in the

day, walking about on Broad Street under guard, making little purchases of this and that, he didn't know what, there wasn't much they could buy—

Making his way into the crowd milling about in a nondescript silence, their attention apparently half on the worn wooden coaches, half on seeking out what sun broke through the rain clouds; standing for a while with his cold hands in his coat pockets, the bearded young men of Ohio and Illinois in the comic caps hopping and limping and jumping down from the train steps, forming a line under the watchful gaze of the City Guard, with "GA" on their collars and the long old-fashioned muskets across their chests.

One of the clean-faced officers in dust-gray talked to them for a minute in words he couldn't distinguish. Then the line crumbled into dark-blue fragments and "the enemy" squatted in the sun and walked the platform and tied a muddy shoe and swung their arms in the cold.

"Have you any objection, Captain, if I talk to some of these fellows?" The young man, perhaps a little old for a captain but still young to him, gave him a steady noncommittal look and he went on, "My youngest boy, Jo, is up round Chattanooga somewhere. His mother hasn't heard from him in nearly three months. I thought some of these fellows might have seen the company, might know something."

It didn't seem to make any difference: the captain turned away to a sergeant of the City Guard who was saluting him. The whole thing was like some hideous game that both sides were playing half-heartedly,—hauling prisoners about on trains needed for other things, feeding them food precious as gold; and the Yanks sending down trains of munitions to swap for cotton at ten cents a pound,—and hauling it north to sell it for thirty—

"Where were you taken, son?"

The boy was leaning his shoulders against the wooden side of the shed, hands in his pants' pockets, his cap over his eyes; he looked up with a dull bloodshot stare and after a minute muttered, "Rome."

Mr. Quintard asked him if he had taken part in the battle at Chickamauga Creek, but he shook his head.

Another had been taken in Mississippi. The fourth one he talked to had been in the battle. He had been in a prison pen at Rome for six weeks. "I've got a son up there—somewhere," Mr. Quintard said. "Three of them, as a matter of fact. Jo's in the Clinch Rifles. Ever hear any talk about the Clinch Rifles?"

The soldier looked at him without any response. "Where they taking us?"

He told him he understood they were on the way to Richmond. "Would you like a smoke?"

"Say, I sure would."

"That's a Spanish cigar," Mr. Quintard told him. "That cigar ran the blockade from Cuba." He handed the boy a box of fusee matches and waited to get it back. Two or three other prisoners gathered round them. "You boys want to smoke too?" he smiled and handed them the other two cigars in his pocket. "You'll have to divide them up; that's all I've got.—What's the weather been like up there?"

"Rain."

"Mud up to your neck."

Mr. Quintard shook his head. "Cold?"

"Faired off cold the day we left—"

He walked on to the office. The war to them was details; rain and cold and hunger and sweat and being scared. And it was probably details too to Amos and Theron and Jo,—Now Isaac loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age—

It took somebody like the editor of the *Washington Republican* to put the details together and see it whole: "The only way in which we can get a political foothold in the South is to extirpate this close corporation of slaveholders by destroying slavery. It is not a war between sections, but between ideas and institutions—"

They wanted a political foothold in the South. And an economic foothold. Fighting for the freedom of the slaves? Fighting for the

freedom of the Yankee capitalists to dictate the tariff policies of the nation!—

Luke opened the door and brought him an envelope. He sliced it open with a bone letter opener and held the paper to the lamp-light. There was no signature and he guessed what it was about. "You were seen yesterday consorting with the Yankee prisoners. This is an outrageous and unpatriotic act—"

He threw it into the fire and watched it burst into a flame. Consorting with the enemy! There were no letters from the public about the seven hundred per cent profits the Confederate government had to pay the shipowners for bringing in munitions.



IT WAS QUITE a different Mr. Utting today. He received them with hardly a trace of a smile, closing the heavy white door himself and waving perfunctorily at chairs. In the silence George suddenly remembered Mr. Utting had never seen Jack Winn before and he started to introduce him.

But Mr. Utting began at once, as if an introduction were of no consequence. "Now, gentlemen, let's get this straight before we waste any more of our time." His tone was quiet but very clear and George had a feeling that the worst had not only happened but that no attempt at persuasion on his part would do any good. "There's no use going to a doctor if you're not going to take the doctor's advice.—Is there?"

George spoke up quickly. "What happened, Mr. Utting, was—" "What in the world did you let the newspapers get hold of it for?" "What happened was that while I was waiting for Jack at the *News* office he was talking to the *Journal*—"

"You've turned the whole thing over to the mob." He opened out his hands and gazed at each of them in turn. "Everybody's talking about it. I haven't heard so much talk on the streets of this

town since—since—” He dismissed it and ended with, “I don’t know whether I can do anything for you or not.”

Winn leaned toward him from his chair with a little-boy’s smile. “But they’re all on our side, Mr. Utting.”

Mr. Utting sat down at his desk and swung himself round facing the Venetian blinds and the bits of monument visible in the cracks. “I don’t know whether there’s much anybody can do.”

“I reckon seventy-five people’ve called me up,” Winn continued, giving his head an amazed shake.

George wished he could stop the boy from talking about it. Obviously their first problem was Mr. Utting; to go on emphasizing the very angle of it Mr. Utting resented was a sure way of getting themselves dismissed. He tried to catch Winn’s eye, but the boy was watching Mr. Utting’s rigid profile and continuing with a certain pride: “People I never heard of. One man offered to send me a hundred dollars on the cost of going to court—”

“He didn’t do it, did he?” Mr. Utting said to the window.

“One fellow called me just before I left the station. He said, ‘Now you’ve got ‘em, boy, right where you want ‘em. They’ve overshot the’selves this time, sure.’ Why, two or three people’ve told me this thing can go straight on into Federal Court.” Mr. Utting wiggled a couple of fingers of his right hand at the mention of “Federal Court” and then was still again, and Winn finished by explaining, “I’m just giving you a notion what people are saying.”

“It’s not as easy to put your hand on the people as you seem to think. People are this way today, that way tomorrow. In a week they’ll forget this whole thing—”

“Not this thing!” Winn wagged his head at George. “No, *sir*. They’re hot, Mr. Utting. They want to know what I’m going to do.—I’ve told every one of ‘em I’m getting the best legal advice in town and I’m going to be guided by that—”

“You told them you’d come to me!”

George glanced at his hat and his briefcase; this looked like the end.

But Winn, to his inexpressible relief, said, "Oh, no, sir. I just said the best advice."

Mr. Utting smiled with a little speechless shake of his head.

There was a short silence then Mr. Utting changed the pitch of his chair in a way that suggested to George he had reached his decision. "I am reluctant," he said slowly, enunciating every word, "to touch any legal matter that's had the publicity this has. There's no such thing as favorable publicity. All publicity's bad. But," he picked up a silver paper cutter and balanced it on the edge of its handle, "if you want to put yourself entirely in my hands," he laid the paper cutter down, "I will do what I can for you."

"Yes, sir," Winn said promptly. "That's what I want to do."

George felt a weight lifted from his shoulders; he couldn't help smiling to himself at Winn who had apparently not been worried at all.

Mr. Utting laid a large but somehow delicately formed hand on the plate glass of the desk and lifted and lowered it, as he spoke, with a curiously emphatic noiselessness. "Well, don't make—any—more—statements—to anybody. If the reporters try to get at you, tell them you've got nothing to say. And stick to it. I don't want you to even talk about it to your friends." He took his hand off the glass and relaxed a little. "The first thing to do is let it cool off.—Justice is a dish rarely served hot."

"But don't you think public opinion can help—"

"I think public opinion, son, is almost invariably wrong,—for the simple reason that the public has about as much foresight as one of my camellia bushes." He waved his clean hands and smiled.

"I don't see why we can't use this thing to put Doc Buden in jail and turn the whole gang out—"

"Now, just a minute, just a minute. Let's not jump the gun. Maybe you're inclined to be a little impetuous." He glanced tolerantly at George for corroboration. Then he settled back in his chair and gathered up his thoughts. "I want you, first of all, to go back to Friday night. Tell me everything; from the time you bought your ticket to the game, to—"

George listened half-heartedly to the story he knew by now as well as Winn. He wondered if he couldn't slip out and leave them. Hadn't he done just about everything he could do? He had set the thing in motion, got it safely under way; the rest was really up to Winn and Mr. Utting,—as she had said. He looked again at his hat on the table beneath the window, then on beyond it at the monument to the Georgians who had signed the Declaration of Independence,—rising up like the chimney of the old powder mill, three generations later, and, three still later, the chimneys of the cotton mills today, weaving tent cloth for the young men fighting for freedom, shirts for the Army—that Congress had all but disbanded—in response to the will of the people—with no more foresight than a camellia bush—

He read a scroll on the wall beside him by which the President of the United States of America appointed William Ashby Utting a Lieutenant Colonel of Field Artillery "in the one hundred and forty-second year of the Independence of the United States . . . The Adjutant General's Office, October 14, 1918—"

"Any man in this town could be thrown in jail if he said something the Gestapo didn't like. Why, my number's coming up before my local board—"

"I know. I know. It's indefensible. He hasn't got a leg to stand on."

"Why can't the people just put him out—"

He had forty-six test papers to grade too,—on the causes of the Revolution—

"Son, you have to go at these things in the proper way. It's like a game of golf. You've got to hit the ball with a legal club or it doesn't count. You can't just walk into a trap and pick up your ball and throw it out. You've got to study it all over and decide whether you want a number-six iron or a number-seven. And sometimes, you know," he raised his eyebrows comically at Winn, "you can't get out at all, not with any of them.—Now, Buden, in my guess, hasn't the remotest idea of resigning, not the remotest. All right. Discard that. What recourse have you? Fire him. All

right, who can fire him? The Civil Service Commission can fire him. But the members of the Civil Service Commission were appointed on Buden's recommendation. Suppose you go to the Civil Service Commission and you ask for a hearing. You file a complaint against Buden—"

Winn's face changed and George felt his own changing too: "Does somebody have to make a complaint before they do anything?"

"They're not a policing body, Cliatt. It's not one of their duties to investigate every rumor and newspaper story. It would be up to Winn, here, the offended party—"

"It ain't just me that's been offended. It's every man in this town."

Mr. Utting took a deep patient breath. "In all probability a complaint would have to be filed,—by you, or by Mr. Cliatt, there, or by somebody who declares he has been aggrieved."

Winn looked at George as if for a minute he didn't know what to say. "Maybe we could get three or four people, these people been calling me up,—maybe we could get a lot of people to file the complaint." He turned back to Mr. Utting: "Would that be O.K.?"

"The right of one citizen would not be denied to several," Mr. Utting pronounced. "And of course I wouldn't want to say, just on horseback here, there's not a possibility the Commission may act on its own motion, if it considers the matter of sufficient gravity—"

"They could act if they wanted to?" George asked him.

"Without a study of the instrument I couldn't say where their authority begins and ends.—Gentlemen, why don't we do this: it will certainly be apparent in the next few days whether they intend to act or not; let's just sit right still here in the boat and see what they going to do." He looked from one to the other in the silence that followed, then pushed the paper cutter away from him and stood up. "Anyhow, let me sleep on it a little bit. As the niggers say, 'Let me get my ducks in a row—'"

At last he was free to go talk to her—



AS SHE LEFT the telephone she saw, through a flimsy window of the crooked little house, Jane and the three children wandering loosely out of the yard into Kent Street. She had evidently shooed them all out when Allen went to the phone,—giving her the empty house to talk freely in, to meet her “date” in—

Oh, she wasn’t mad with him. Not exactly. It wasn’t very flattering to be stood up for something like this, but she wasn’t interested in flattery; another sort of reason and she wouldn’t have been mad at all. But there was something so exasperating about seeing him meddling like this in a matter that didn’t concern him, that could do him nothing but harm, all because of some imaginary—

She walked swiftly down the sandy yard and overtook them. “Something’s come up,” she said. “He can’t make it.”

“Well, damn him!”

“He couldn’t help it.”

“Yes, but calling at the last minute—”

“It’s all right.”

“And you defending him.” She studied Allen’s face as if about to say something else then whistled through her teeth at her children who dropped everything and scurried up on each side of her. She gave them her hands, waited until three olive-green trucks piled with identical rectangular crates from the Arsenal swept heavily past them, and ran across Oglethorpe Street. On the other side, when Allen had set Jeff down again, Jane said to her cheerfully, “You know, Kathy has a little statue of Saint Anthony she prays to. Last Wednesday Kathy ran out of sugar; completely out. There wasn’t enough left in the sugar bowl for supper. She said she didn’t know what in the world to do; the new ticket didn’t come in until the first and she had to have some sugar. She started out to the Big Star and then she went back and she put Saint Anthony on the sideboard beside the sugar bowl with no sugar and she said, ‘Now, look here! You just get me some sugar, damn your soul, or I’m going to throw you out in the rain and leave you there.’ She ran

into Lucy in front of the tea store and Lucy said, 'Ken's gone on maneuvers. You don't know anybody, honey, do you, wants an extra sugar ticket?" Then she looked at Allen. "If you want me to tell this guy off I'd be delighted to do it."

Allen shook her head with a smile.

"What sort of excuse did he offer, for heaven's sake?"

"Oh, you've read all this stuff on the front page about arresting the man—"

"I never read the front page. You hear about that anyhow,—my God, you don't mean your guy's been in the jail!"

"No. But he acts exactly as if he had been. It's somebody he hardly knows. He's taking him to a lawyer now—"

"If I was a man I'd rather see you ride a bicycle—get down off that wall!—And to think I'm going to have another one! And to think how worth while it seemed at the time." She gave Allen a sideways scowl: "I wouldn't be like this if it hadn't been for you. I don't think I ever told you—"

"You told me."

"Of all the times of day or night to meet your husband again after the poor guy'd been sleeping on the ground for six weeks. He gets a three-day pass before going to the PE and God knows where for how long and he wires his shapely wife to meet him in Richmond; and she gets a brand new permanent and a seventy-five cent nail-do and goes to the ticket office and finds the God-damned train gets to Richmond at three-fifteen in the morning."

"You told me—"

"I didn't know whether to go to bed or sit up. If I sat up I'd be a wreck; if I went to bed I'd crawl out looking like nothing human. And Til would be mad for having to wait up. And he'd need a shave. And there wouldn't be any place to get breakfast except the station. And what in the world would we say to each other at three o'clock in the morning?—I got up at two-thirty, cussing the railroad and Hitler and the way I looked in the mirror and the sticky way my skin felt, it was so hot. It was so hot I just put on my new linen dress and not a damn thing else except a pair of high-

heeled pumps. And he was standing there on the dirty platform all shaved and washed, with the cleanest shirt and pants I've ever laid eyes on; I know he hadn't ever sat down in them. And he told me I looked like three million dollars and I told him he looked like five. And we took a taxi to the hotel and everything looked like Saturday-morning inspection; ashtrays empty, nothing out of place, clean sheets on the bed, and sitting in a bucket of ice by the window was a bottle of champagne—”

“Mama.” Allen gave him her hand.

“There's just nothing like it, sugar, in the whole wide world. I hope it's some pleasure to them. They think it's going to be and maybe it is; I've never been quite sure. But I hope they get something out of it because—”

“What are you going to do about it now?”

“Well,—of course he fixed me for a long time to come. I'm no good to anybody now. Maybe by the time the baby comes the war'll be over, one way or the other. And, you know, I don't care in the least who wins,—as long as this man gets back with two arms and two legs.—Allen, sugar, why don't you just go on and lay this guy—”

“That's not the question—”

“If you're worried about him being too old—”

“I'm not at all!”

“But if you are, don't. Young men are too impetuous. Nobody minds being thrown around but with them it's all over before—”

“Where'd you learn to talk such outlandish stuff?”

“If I wasn't knocked up—don't you love the expression—”

“Mama, why did the Chaps shoot daddy?”

“Oh, darling, quit asking mama that. I've told you.”

“Because the Chaps are bad?”

“Yes.”

“Did the Chaps think daddy was bad too?”

“Yes.”

“Now that daddy's in heaven the Chaps can't kill him now.”

"No.—Now you run along and play." She watched him running ahead, felt Jane's hand touch hers and burst out crying.

They sat down together on a broken brick wall, her face in her hands. After a while Jane lighted two cigarettes and handed her one; she shook her head then changed her mind and reached for it. "I guess I'm feeling sorry for myself." She took a deep draw on the cigarette, dried her eyes and sat there gazing at the orange pebbles in the sidewalk, half listening to the cars going by and the children and the persistent, far-off clatter from a long building in the Arsenal grounds. When she realized it was a machine gun on the testing range she stood up; Jane gave her whistle, quieter than before but still a close enough imitation of a sergeant's to be palatable to a lieutenant's children, and they walked on.

"You and Jeff come over and stay with us. I'd do anything in the world for you. And anyhow you're going to have to help me through this thing—"

Allen took her hand. "That's sweet of you. We've been here long enough; I know it,—and yet I hate to go back home—"

"You can't pick up and leave just because this guy's made you mad."

"It isn't that. Mother Estes doesn't approve—"

"Listen. This is your life, honey."

"But I'm not sure she isn't right. Maybe George is just the first man that's been nice to me in so long,—that I wanted to be nice to me."

"Nice to you!"

"Oh, he is nice to me. And he's a nice guy too. I could shake him for meddling in this other business but it was a decent thing to do. I'm not decent like that. I want the world to leave me alone. I'm not patriotic. I don't believe in this awful war. The whole thing's insane." She flipped the cigarette violently out into the street. "People ought to mind their own business."

In front of the house the paper boy swished through the leaves, stopped the bicycle beside them and steadyng himself with his feet on the ground, handed Jane a paper out of the sack on the

handle bars with a solemn politeness; then he pushed himself into motion at once, passed the goggle-eyed children with a bland disdain and said, "Hey, P'fessor!"

She gazed at him coming toward them with his long strides, repentance written so heavily on his face as to be ludicrous. "Suppose I told you," she said with level eyebrows, "that I had cancelled all kinds of dates to go with you this afternoon and to call me up at the last minute—"

Then breaking into a laugh at his expression and holding out her left hand to him.

He nodded into Jane's unenthusiastic eyes. "I brought Jeff a present."

He reached toward the pocket of his tweed coat with one hand, fumbled for a moment, then set his briefcase between his feet and with both hands managed to extricate a fistful of tense black kitten, legs up, claws out, pink mouth open in an inaudible whine. He put it on his coat sleeve in a ball and scratched the back of its neck with his fingernail. "Can he have it?" he whispered.

"It's too late to ask that now."

He kneeled down and let the children see it. One of them said, "Ooh, he's sharp," and Jane picked it up. "He's hungry; we'll give him some milk," she said with tremendous tact. "Come on, gang."

Jeff said, "Mama, is he a herman being?" and Allen laughed and said, "Do you want to call him Herman?"

"Yes, I want to call him Herman Being."

"Let's go, push. Herman wants supper."

She watched them going away up into the yard then turned her head and saw him looking at her.

"I had to come by and see you for a minute. You're not—"

"No, I'm not." She smiled at him; "Of course not.—But are you through with it now?"

"I think so. If the Civil Service Commission does something that'll be O.K. If it doesn't then Winn'll do something."

"I'm glad you're out of it. I don't know anything about that sort

of thing but—well, thinking of what you told me happened to Mr. Dobit—”

“Oh!” he laughed. “That wasn’t like this at all. This is something against the people. I wish you could have seen my class this morning, my little Gallup poll—”

“They were interested?”

“Baby! Were they interested!—People on the bus were talking about it. Even my boardinghouse—”

She smiled at his vehemence.

“I haven’t seen an afternoon paper,” he said. “What did it say?”

“I didn’t look at it.” She unfolded it. “Here’s something about it: NO ACTION IS YET PLANNED TO ASSURE CITIZENS THEY WON’T BE TREATED LIKE WINN WAS.” She smiled, “Like Winn was.”

He took the paper away from her, glanced at it, moved over to the curb and sat down. She pulled her skirt under her and sat beside him, looking at his bony student hands holding the sheet in front of him. He started reading aloud in a fast mumble, eliding words and whole phrases: “Chairman Harry Wasden and three . . . Civil Service Commission, when requested . . . statement . . . newspapers, said no discussion had been held . . . no action yet planned to assure Fredericksburg citizens there would be no repetition . . .”

He pushed his hat to the back of his head, folded the paper about the column and read slowly, “The matter will not come before the commission except on formal charges.” He stopped for a second then went on again hastily, “The appeal was made . . . commissioners because no assurance . . . from Mr. Buden he would set the matter to rights . . . by a public statement of apology to Mr. Winn or . . . assurance . . . not treat other citizens in the same manner . . .”—That’s a funny one.” He went back and read the paragraph again. “How are you going to set the matter to rights with an apology? What’s being sorry got to do with it?—Mr. John T. Oliff . . . member of the commission said . . . not studied the case . . . Commissioner O. J. Reddick, Jr. . . . “I just got back in

town . . ." Commissioner T. Walter Locklon said . . . no comment to make . . ."

He crumpled the paper between his hands. "Of all the God-damned collusive cynicism!"

She put her hand under his arm for a second then took the newspaper from him and smoothed it out on her knees.

"Did you ever hear the like of that?" He got up on his feet and she stood up slowly beside him, putting the paper in her hand on the other side as if to separate it from him. "Now people are going to be really mad.—Maybe, as a matter of fact, they've done just exactly the right thing. People can see now it's not just Buden; it's the whole setup—"

"Honey," she said, studying him with a faint smile. "Forget it.—Come in and I'll give you a coke." She took his hand and he seemed almost to wake out of a dream; he smiled at her with a shake of his head.

"Do you know how long it takes to make out forty-six Monthly Averages?—When are we going up the canal? How about Saturday? We'll take a lunch."

"You forget I'm not only a mother but a nurse too—"

"You don't look the part.—I'll ride Jeff on the handle bars."

"Maybe Jane'll keep him. I'll have to see."

"I'll call you tomorrow."

She nodded, took a step away and stopped. "And just remember you've done everything you can do.—Right doesn't make might."

"Do you mind if I kiss you here in the middle of Kent Street in broad daylight—"

"Honey, I'm a practical, level-headed, foot-on-the-ground old woman and, life being what it is,—good-by." She ran up the slope of the yard, glanced over her shoulder once and waved to him standing there watching her. Right doesn't make might, darling, and if you think it does—

IN THE INTERVAL between the last echoing "boom" of the Schützen Club Band and the orator of the evening a Negro usher in white gloves handed Lieutenant Girardey a broadside: On Saturday, November 25, 1871, at 3 in the Afternoon, A GRAND BALLOON ASCENSION will be given by the Distinguished Aeronaut, Prof. Monocelli, who will make a Journey beyond the Clouds—

He threw it down impatiently, mumbled an excuse to his friends, and clutching his polished scabbard to his thigh, hurried with long strides up the maroon-carpeted aisle of the Opera House. In the crowded foyer he paused unself-consciously before a broad mirror to check his belts and buttons and the brass insignia of the Georgia Clinch Rifles on his collar, then he gave each point of his moustache a solicitous twist and strolled out on the open promenade above the great doors of the entrance.

She was standing at the balustrade absorbed in the spectacle below under the gas lamps of Jackson Street where the Negro Drum-and-Fife Corps of the Clinch Rifles was parading back and forth in front of the Opera House behind the jet-black style of Troxy's six-foot-seven and his gilt-tasseled drum-major's wand, the squealing of the fifes no less ear-splitting for an occasional spirited fumbling at the pitch. She gave him that self-composed laugh that seemed such a taunt—and yet might not have been,—pinned like a flower on her impenetrable reserve which was at once distant but, mysteriously, not prim.

When Troxy's maneuvers were brought to a sudden halt by a signal from below and the crowd about them began to move back to their seats, she started to follow them. "Miss Estes," he said. She gazed up at him with mild surprise, fingering the folded fan attached to her wrist by a white ribbon tied in a somehow playful bow. She waited inquiringly and he stood beside her at the balustrade, both of them looking down on the line of carriages glistening under the street lamps, on the almost invisible cluster of whips and top hats lounging against the warm brick wall; from the stage inside

he could hear the deep Congressional voice of Lawyer Demetree begin to resound among the scrolls and columns and chandeliers, though for him it was without words, only a gleaming sinuous note.

"Miss Willy," he said. He had never called her that before; it was quite possible she might object.

*"Nearly a decade, ladies and gentlemen,—has flowed past us into irrevocable time—since the flower of the Confederacy—lay dying on the field of honor—pierced and torn by the minnie-balls of an inexhaustible foe—"*

She laughed as if she hadn't noticed how he had addressed her and pointed the end of the fan at some little stir among the carriages. He moved a few inches closer to her side.

*"—come now to a time—when it is fitting to memorialize these honored dead—with the erection of a monument—to their imperishable glory. We are gathered here tonight to subscribe the funds still needed—for this worthy cause. For I am sad—I am humiliated—to tell you that all efforts to raise—"*

"Miss Willy," he swallowed a great lump in his throat. "I want your permission to—to broach a very personal—question."

She glanced up at him in amazement then lowered her eyes intently to the soft white kid of her long gloves rolled into a little ball at the back of each wrist. He watched the glow of the street lamps flickering beneath her chin and swelling the top of her gown into shadows so incredibly gentle he could scarcely breathe.

"Why, what possible question can you mean, Lieutenant Girardey?"

*"—their glory—and your neglect—will travel down the track of time together. The graves of our heroes will tell a tale—to be admired for ever. Time will weave a green banner—over the lost. But shall I say the young man has withheld his aid because his income was small?—He has spent fifties and hundreds at the circuses—and at the trotting tracks—"*

"I mean, Miss Willy,—you can hardly have failed to observe over all these months—"

"Observe what, Lieutenant Girardey?"

"You possibly do not recall the afternoon at the Grand Schützenfest—"

*—shall I say that the older men have their souls upon the rack—to add to their per cents—without giving a thought—to those who died in defense of their rights?—Shall I say that the ladies—in their bower of rest—have thought only of the adornments of fashion,—utterly ignoring the heroes—who sleep in their graves. If there is one source of human sympathy—that should be more touching than any other—it is the death of the patriot—fighting for his native land—”*

He laid his hand upon the cool feathery wrinkles of the glove about her elbow, touched with his fingers the sudden smoothness of her skin and clutched her swiftly against his white crossbelts as if abducting her from the indignant protests which were not materializing as spontaneously as he had expected.—Then at last, "Lieutenant Girardey!—You amaze me—"

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HE PICKED UP the afternoon paper lying against the step of his balcony, unlocked his door and pulled the chain of the desk lamp. He glanced at the headline again and threw the paper on the floor. The Commission is not a policing body, gentlemen; you've got to hit this ball with the right club or it doesn't count—

Well, anyhow, one thing was clear enough. The Civil Service Commission was not going to do anything unless they had to. In foreseeing that Mr. Utting had certainly known his way about. That meant, as Mr. Utting guessed, somebody would have to present charges.

He laid the briefcase on the desk and took out the test papers and the Treadway and Bruce; he walked over to the shelves and slipped it neatly back into its place.—The obvious person, of course, was Winn.

And yet when he thought that, he could feel his inner eyes shift

a little. Not that it wasn't perfectly true, but putting a disagreeable job on somebody else was a pleasure that always carried a barb. Hadn't *everybody* been aggrieved?—that calculated lawyer's word. It wasn't just Jack Winn. It was the people. Why couldn't the people do it? Why wasn't this a chance for the "common man" to rise up in all his indignation? You might treat the people of some countries like fools and imbeciles but you couldn't treat Americans that way; you couldn't treat any free self-governing people that way. If a people could govern themselves they could certainly take care of a situation like this—

He hung his coat on a chair, rolled up his sleeves and went into the bathroom. He washed his hands and his forearms; washing the bends of your elbows made you feel almost as clean as if you had taken a bath. He unhooked his glasses and washed his face. She didn't seem to mind if he had to wear glasses; and she never seemed to give a thought to the difference in their ages. How far would a pay check go if there were two of them,—three of them? Not very far; but a practical, level-headed, foot-on-the-ground young woman, young enough to call herself old, could stretch it further than he stretched it. And it was sure. Not much, but sure; Mr. Dobit had settled that point. Tenure and the luxury of the fishy eye.

But the trouble with public indignation was it had no edge. It was merely brute strength. It had no skill; any little lawyer with a correspondence-school course in legal jiujitsu could toss the public on its great back. Even Mr. Utting said, "Wait until they cool down." Not, Wait and see *if* they cool down! "Give them a week and they'll forget the whole thing."—He didn't believe it. Not if somebody could explain it to them so that they saw the real significance of it—

But there it was again: "somebody" wasn't the people; "somebody" was one. "Somebody" was edge, skill. "Somebody" was George Washington and Tom Paine and James Oglethorpe and James Jackson and Nathanael Greene. "Somebody" was a man who risked something, sacrificed something, to break the inertia.

"Somebody" was Mr. Dobit's man-on-the-cross.—And "somebody" was somebody else too—

He heard Martha walk out of the pantry with the supper bell and dangle it in brass tumbles up to the front door and back. His movements accelerated almost without volition; he buttoned his cuffs, picked up his hair brushes, glanced in the mirror of his painted bureau.—Suppose, though, there *was* "somebody."

Suppose Winn presented the charges. That would be the "edge." The people could then take their natural part of the power behind the edge, the weight; the edge would be useless without the mass behind it. But with both edge and mass,—you could do anything. There the charges would be before the Commission. And there the people would be, waiting; just waiting. The people wouldn't have to do anything but wait, with their huge accusing stare. The Commission would have to act. And there was just one way they could act: they would have to repudiate Buden—

He nodded to the ancient Mrs. Quintard at her table by the door, smiling at him out of her velvet choker with a sort of ghostly lasciviousness that was at the same time repulsive and flattering. "Dear boy," she squeaked, as if he were twenty-three, "what is all this filthy business in the newspapers—"

"Telephone, Mr. Cliatt." He half suspected Martha was merely coming to his rescue but when he reached the telephone the receiver was lying on the table.

He recognized the voice at once, eager, faintly conspiratorial: "P'fessor?"

"Hello, Jack."

"Mr. Utting call you?"

He told him No, slightly surprised. Then he added that he hadn't been home long. "Maybe he tried and couldn't get me. What's going on?"

"He didn't say. He just told me to come by his office tonight at eight o'clock. He called me about an hour ago. I don't know what it's all about. I thought sure you'd be there, though."

His immediate feeling was satisfaction; the processes he had

helped put in motion, then, had at last become strong enough to roll on without him. It was now a matter for Winn and his lawyer, as Mr. Utting obviously realized.

Then it suddenly became apparent to him why Mr. Utting had asked Winn back so quickly. "You've seen the paper."

"Yeah, I read all that eyewash."

"The Commission's not going to do anything; I imagine that's what Mr. Utting was waiting to be sure of."

"I reckon so—"

"I wish you'd do this for me, Jack. I'm interested in what he says. Call me when you leave him, will you?"

"Sure thing."

"It doesn't matter how late it is; I've got a lot of work to do."

"I'll call you soon as I can get to a phone—"

As soon as he had had supper he hurried back downstairs to the apartment. He shut the door, thought a second, then opened it a few inches; if Winn should happen to call him later than ten he would save himself one of Mrs. D'Antel's cold looks if he listened for the ring and answered it himself.

He took off his coat and loosened his necktie in a sort of signal to all these distractions that there was work to be done. Absent-mindedly filling a pipe and lighting it quickly, he pushed the test papers into a neat pile at his left hand and cleared a space on the desk at his right. It would take him between three and four hours. Or rather, it used to take that, with his mind rattling along steadily, not happy, not sad, not excited, not worried. It might take longer now,—under the handicap of happiness.

At nine twenty-four by his watch in front of him he heard the phone begin to ring distantly through the caverns of the halls. He lifted his eyes without moving his head and waited. When somebody answered it he got up and went to his door. It was for somebody else.

At twenty minutes to twelve he wrote a weary "C" on the back of the last paper. Then he gazed at the mark for a long moment, felt about for his blue pencil and added a plus sign to compensate

for exhaustion,—for being sick of parrots, sick of the “unteachable third” that sometimes seemed two thirds, sick of seeing his words clinging meaninglessly to young sleeves—like lint on the coat of a cotton-weigher, far back in the days of baseball in the gravelled courtyards of the warehouses—

He wondered if it was possible the conference was still going on. Surely it wouldn’t take Mr. Utting and his client all this time to map a course of action. Maybe there was some other reason. Maybe —oh, he didn’t know why the boy hadn’t called. Maybe it was just simple irresponsibility. One or two little things about Winn had made him wonder—

He packed the test papers into the briefcase, ready for tomorrow, and went to bed. There was really no reason to think anything had gone wrong—

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IT WAS FOUR minutes to eight when Jack Winn pulled his eyes up from the magnetic nudity of a line of magazine covers beside the soda fountain to the clock over the dusty mirror. He drained his bottle of coca-cola with the same thoughtless familiarity he would light a cigarette, slapped a nickel down on the wet marble and, after a glance in the mirror that checked on his newly brushed hair and the broad blue collar of his shirt lying neatly over the bright plaid of his Sunday coat, walked out into the deserted shadows of Law Range.

There were lights buring beyond the glass panels of the front door but the big brass knob would not turn. He put his thumb on the bell button, hesitated for a fraction of a second, pressed it lightly; while he waited he ran both palms backward over his hair. It was sort of like going to see a new girl—

Mr. Utting opened the door himself, a freshly lighted cigar in his left hand as if he had not been there very long; he was dressed in a nice brown suit cut with a subtle expertness to fit his heavy shoulders. He looked fresh and clean and Jack thought he must

have been home to the tall stucco house on Weatherford Road, changed, had supper and come down again. "Come in, son," he said in his cordial baritone. "Go in my office there and sit down. Make yourself at home. I'll be with you in a minute."

Jack strolled into the corner office and moved about with his hands in his pockets looking at Mr. Utting's various framed credentials and mementos. He had thought he would feel more uncomfortable without the professor than he really did; as a matter of fact he wondered if he didn't feel more comfortable without him. He didn't need to be led round by the hand.

He was standing in front of the mantelpiece reading the inscription on the silver band round the grip of a German officer's pistol framed in a small glass case on the shelf when Mr. Utting came in quietly with a Manila folder in his fingers and laid it on a corner of his desk. "Pull up a chair, young man."

"I didn't know whether you wanted professor to come down or not," Jack said tentatively.

Mr. Utting glanced up in surprise. "No reason he shouldn't be here if you want him." He hesitated solicitously as he was about to lower himself into the leather swivel chair.

"Oh, no, sir. That's all right."

"I just thought we might talk this thing over between ourselves." He finished seating himself and rocked back. "You know," he smiled, "schoolteachers are wonderful people. We couldn't get along without 'em. But it's sometimes hard to talk to them. They live off there in a little world of their own and they often can't see the realities of a situation the way you and I can as businessmen making our living in a practical hard-headed world. Maybe that's not true of your friend Cliatt; I don't know him. Never laid eyes on him until the other day when he came in here.—Cigar?"

Jack repulsed the box vehemently with his hand and Mr. Utting laughed sympathetically. "Better off without them. No question in the world about that."

He swung his chair round sideways, was silent for a moment, then said, "Mr. Winn," more or less as if saying Gentlemen of the

Jury. "I've been looking into this unfortunate affair, all angles of it. Partly because you've come to me for counsel but also because it's my duty as a citizen to look into something that concerns not you alone but every man and woman in our community. If what you did constitutes 'Disorderly Conduct' and you can be arrested for it without a warrant, seventy-two hours later, held incommunicado, fingerprinted, photographed,—well, Lord help us, we're in a bad way."

"That's what professor says. If they get away with this, Mr. Utting, we might just as well start saying, 'Heil, Hitler!'"

"It's perfectly true—"

"People are scared to open their mouth now. There's been a lot of letters to the paper but you notice how they're signed, don't you? 'Citizen,' 'Taxpayer,'—you don't see anybody's *name* signed to 'em."

"All you say is true."

"And how about us guys going in the Army? Is this what we're supposed to get out and fight for?"

Mr. Utting nodded his head, not interrupting him. After a while, when Jack paused for breath, he said, smiling with a slight restraint as you might brake your reel with your thumb to keep the line from snarling, "Well, with all its faults, of course America is tremendously worth fighting for; Fredericksburg is tremendously worth fighting for."

"Oh, sure, sure. I just don't like to be shoved around by a political boss."

"Boss? Son, he's not the boss," Mr. Utting laughed. "He's the shop foreman.—Let me ask you this, Winn. You're not a vindictive person; I can see that. What you want is to correct a bad situation. You don't want just the empty satisfaction of punishing the guilty. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, sir, I reckon—"

"You're not just trying to exact your pound of flesh because a man overstepped his authority; what you want is to make sure it doesn't happen again. That's the way people feel about it I've talked to.—Let's be absolutely realistic about this thing for a minute; let's

pull off all the beautiful romantic leaves and flowers of sentiment and see just what we've got here. Suppose we decide to press this matter; what happens?"

He tilted his head back, glanced up at a corner of the ceiling and put his fingers together in front of him. "You present to the Civil Service Commission a formal charge against Buden and demand a hearing. What happens? First, there'll be some delay. They may even say frankly that to hold an immediate hearing would work for the impairment of justice on account of the heated nature of public opinion. And there's reason in that, you know; the more upset people are, the harder it is to arrive at justice,—but anyhow, there would in all probability be some delay. In the meantime people begin to cool off; they get distracted by other things, they go on back to their business, they find after all the town seems to have survived. The hearing finally comes up one day and it's merely a case of you against Buden,—you, if I may speak frankly, a perfectly unknown honest operator of a small business, against the most powerful political figure in East Georgia. My guess, Winn, is that the very best you could hope for would be a slap on the wrist for Buden, a caution to be more careful in the future. For yourself, what have you gained?—beyond the enduring antagonism of the authorities, who will be for ever on the watch to catch you in all kinds of petty infractions of the law."

He paused a moment while his vision expanded: "In the sight of heaven, son, we're all sinners, and in the sight of the police we're all lawbreakers. You've probably no idea how many laws you break in a normal day's work. Why, coming down here tonight, I just happened to see a twenty-mile-speed-limit sign; I was doing better than thirty. But the police are very human about it. They forgive us many of our trespasses,—and we in turn, I may say, forgive them many of theirs. We're all human. We all make mistakes."

"Buden won't even admit he made a mistake."

"He might admit that, now he's had time to think it all over. In fact, Winn, that's one reason I suggested you come down here to

night." He glanced at Jack sitting there, his eyes fixed in a mild uncomprehension. In a theatrical silence he swung round to his desk and laid his palm flat on the Manila folder. Then he drew in a deep breath that to Miss Hite meant, New paragraph.

"I have here, Winn, several items that may be of interest to you." He crossed his knees, put the folder on them, opened it and lifted out a sheet of legal-size paper. "Here's a list of the contents of this folder: 1 Three photographic prints of Jack Winn and negative of same; 2 Fingerprint impressions of same; 3 Fifty-two dollars in cash, being returned bail deposit of same; 4 Copy of "Special Order to Chief of Police"; 5 Copy of statement by Mr. Buden."

Jack put his head on one side and stared at him in amazement.

"The special order to the chief reads as follows: 'Effective immediately, the practice of arresting persons on a charge of "investigation" will be discontinued except in extreme cases of serious violation of the law. In no case shall a person be arrested for "investigation" as to a violation of a municipal ordinance.'—That isn't signed, but it will be if you say so."

Mr. Utting returned it coolly to the folder and took out a sheet of typescript, holding it in his left hand up before his eyes. "Buden's statement is likewise not signed yet. It has long been the policy of the police department of arresting persons suspected or accused of violation of the law and holding them pending an investigation of the facts. However, the public discussion of this practice and my investigation of the Jack Winn case has led me to conclude that his arrest and detention under the circumstances as they subsequently developed was a mistake. I regret having made the mistake.'" Mr. Utting paused, shifted his glance to the wall before him then back to the paper. "I have no hesitancy in accepting responsibility for the error and in stating that the incident was most regrettable. I always have and always will in the future welcome suggestions from the public."

Mr. Utting held the statement impassively in front of him for a moment longer then slipped it back into the folder and laid the folder on his desk, putting his large clean hand on top of it and

speaking to it: "That statement, together with the order, will be signed and handed to the newspapers for publication tomorrow,—if you say so."

He leaned toward Jack on the near arm of his chair, considered his thoughts for a second, then lowered his voice. "In fact, son, here's what on my mind. Suppose he got the idea of handing these things to the papers *without* your say-so. Where would that leave us and our formal charges?—Buden oversteps his authority. He recognizes his mistake. He says he's sorry. He prints a public apology. He tells his police not to let it happen again.—Won't everybody say, 'Well, what more can a man do?'"

Jack gazed down at his hands, rubbing an old scar he had got when a tire-iron slipped nearly a year ago. Then he looked up: "Of course, anybody's sorry if you catch him."

"True enough, son, but—"

"If you get arrested the judge don't turn you loose just because you say you're sorry."

"Doesn't that sort of depend on your record?" Mr. Utting said, presenting him with a good-natured glance out from under his eyebrows. "If you were a responsible citizen who'd made an honest error,—the judge might give you a suspended sentence—"

"That's what I'm trying to say. This man has a record of taking convicts from the Stockade to work on his private property; he takes 'em in city trucks, on city gas—"

"That's just the 'outs' talking, son."

"I've seen 'em go by my filling station."

"Would you want to swear they hadn't been working on the road somewhere?"

Jack raised his hand and wiggled it conclusively at Mr. Utting's desk. "I know a man who saw 'em working on Buden's property."

"Would he give you an affidavit to that?" Mr. Utting said with an edge.

"Well," Jack returned to his scar, "I don't reckon he would, no, sir. He's scared of his job."

Mr. Utting's gaze became steady and serious. "Son, I wouldn't make charges like that I couldn't prove."

"I just mention it because you spoke of a responsible citizen being allowed to apologize."

"What you must avoid, Winn," said Mr. Utting, relaxing the tension that had begun to pull at his muscles, "is making a martyr of him. When the public reads Buden's apology they're going to think he's done all a man can do. He has tried to right a wrong. If you present charges after this apology—"

"I think he ought to be put out," Jack interrupted him firmly. "I think this thing can be used to break up this whole political gang. Now is the chance for the people to do it. They've been hollering for years about boss government. Here's the chance they been looking for."

"Winn,—when this apology is printed there won't be enough public interest left to force a hearing even if you brought charges. And at the same time you let yourself in for charges of persecution and—"

"Me persecuting Buden!"

"And," Mr. Utting went on patiently, "a business career in this town in which you find yourself continually in hot water with the authorities.—You know, son, you talk about 'turning the rascals out.' You don't realize what you're saying. Why, every business firm in town is set up to function under this regime; it has to be. They don't support 'em, mind you; but they have to go along. If you turned this bunch out not a businessman in town could tell what sort of new bunch of rascals he'd be getting.—And when you start 'turning the rascals out,' son, you're in politics. And politics is one of the principal things my clients pay me so much money to stay completely out of."

Mr. Utting eased his position in the chair with a good-natured chuckle and shifted his tone in the direction of philosophy. "Son, my father was a wise man. I remember one day when I was a boy he called me in his office there on the farm we used to run up in Oglethorpe County. It was a Sunday morning. I remember it like

it was yesterday. He said, 'Ashby, I've just found an honest man. It's old Jeremiah.' Jeremiah was our butler; he'd been working for us all his life. 'But, Papa,' I said, 'I've heard you say a thousand times if ever there was a rascal it was old Jerry. Doesn't he take money out of your cash drawer regular as Saturday night comes round?' 'I've always thought so,' my father said, 'but I've never been sure. Last night I set a trap for Jerry. I never thought he took much, you know; maybe a quarter or fifty cents, according to what change was in the drawer. Last night I took all the change out. I didn't leave a thing in there but a five dollar bill. And this morning when I come in here, what do you think I find? I find four dollars and seventy-five cents. And I say there's an honest man.' " The front of Mr. Utting's brown waistcoat broke into a little spasm of chuckles. "The Home Folks are honest, Mr. Winn. They don't take much."

"I bet they take all they think they can get away with."

"The best government, son, isn't necessarily the most honest government. It's a sort of like a ship's chronometer: the important thing to the captain is not that it should keep perfect time but that he should know the amount of its daily error."

"What do you mean by 'the captain'?"

"The captain?" Mr. Utting smiled. "Well, who would you say was the captain?"

"I'd say the people."

"Oh, no!" He shook his head. "The people are the cargo, son. They don't care. They don't give a tinker's damn. They don't care one way or the other. The captain cares." He laughed a little and glanced at his watch. "Good gracious alive! It's getting late.—Now I think I've explained the alternatives to you. Either you go ahead with charges in the face of almost certain defeat, with the people having long since cooled off and gone about their business, putting yourself at odds with the authorities which can affect you and your business in innumerable ways. Or you accept this apology, sign a receipt for these items and—close the case."

Jack didn't say anything. He sat there looking at the folder on the desk and rubbing the old scar on the back of his hand.

"Of course, too," Mr. Utting added, "if you don't accept it they may go ahead with the case. You'd appear in Recorder's Court with your witnesses. You'd be bound over to the Superior Court. It might drag out for a long time.—You say you expect to go in the Army—"

"Oh, hell! Gimme a pen.—Of course this don't stop people going ahead with the case if they want to."

"By no means. You're just saying, as far as you're concerned, you're satisfied. Of course that won't appear in the newspapers; that's just for the files. All that appears in the papers will be Buden's apology. The people can either accept it or they can present charges; that's not up to you,—there on that line there at the bottom—"

F O U R

*Partly cloudy, continued mild; occasional light rain tonight or early Thursday . . .*

GEORGE HELD HIS glasses delicately by the middle and gave the rimless lenses their thorough morning polish with a fresh handkerchief. He wondered if it wasn't better not to call Winn at all; not because he was still a little annoyed the boy hadn't telephoned last night as he had promised but because failing to do so opened such an easy escape. Let Winn handle it; Winn was taking hold in his own behalf now and that was the way it should be. Maybe Allen was right; certainly the temptation to see it as she saw it was hard to resist—

He heard the newspaper plop against the step of the balcony; he hurriedly wiped the silver earpieces, hooked them over his ears and opened the door as if he had been unconsciously listening for such a signal.

He didn't expect the paper to show any new developments in the incident; whatever Mr. Utting had wanted to see Winn about, Mr. Utting would certainly not have rushed to the newspapers with it. But whether or not there was anything new was secondary; the primary fact was there would certainly be some sort of follow-up article and, no matter how repetitious it might be, it would be of first importance because it was talking to the people,—repeating to the people, like the bells on the old-time firehouses striking the alarm, then striking again—

He opened the paper on the balcony in the soft moist morning.

## FIFTH THREATENS FLANK OF ROMMEL LINE; DUSSELDORF, COLOGNE BLASTED

Just below it, across four columns, he read:

CITIZENS' RIGHTS TO BE PRESERVED  
MISTAKE MADE IN WINN MATTER  
COMMISSIONER SAYS IN STATEMENT

He gazed at the three lines in astonishment, frowned up into the gold of the poplar tree, then read the subhead.

BUDEN OUTLINES NEW POLICY; No MORE  
INDISCRIMINATE ARRESTS; INVESTIGATIONS TO  
BE HELD TO MINIMUM NECESSARY FOR  
SAFETY; REGRETS MISTAKE—

He raced through Buden's statement while his coffee steamed untouched at his elbow. Wasn't it an overwhelming victory? Just that and nothing more nor less. He didn't understand how it had come about but hadn't they, Winn and Mr. Utting and the people who had talked and written to the papers, hadn't they—blasted Dusseldorf, Cologne—

Or was this thing petty and inconsequential? Did it matter, compared with what was happening over Europe, over the Pacific? How about the young American citizens in the bombers, on the sweltering beaches of New Guinea,—we were waiting for the time to advance—

He laid the paper aside and started eating his breakfast. But what were they advancing toward? Toward some distant day of victory when they would return home to all the little cities and towns of America and maybe be arrested for saying they didn't like the way the little cities and towns were governed?

He put down his fork, told Martha he would be back in a minute and went out into the hall and telephoned the filling station. A voice that sounded like the Negro boy's said Mr. Jack hadn't got there yet.

"Tell him Mr. George Cliatt called him. I'll call him again at two-fifteen. Ask him to wait there until I call him, please—"

As he hurried down the hill in the gray deserted morning he began to see it in a somewhat different light. Was it such an overwhelming victory after all? What difference did it make what Buden said? Was it a concession, if you please, to agree to preserve the rights of the citizens! Of course to force an apology out of them was a sort of victory, but it was hardly overwhelming. Wasn't an apology, really, quite beside the point? The only thing the apology showed was they had retreated from their position of yesterday; it showed for all their arrogance they were none too sure of themselves. Retreat though it was, confession of weakness though it was, didn't the apology land them in a stronger position than before? Wasn't it merely taking a step backward to get both feet under them? They had been off balance and they knew it; by giving way a little, hadn't they taken some of the power out of whatever the public might do?

Well, if that was their plan, it wouldn't work because anybody could see this wasn't a matter of apology or no apology. What Buden said now didn't change what he had done and what he still had the power to do. A moment's thought showed that.

Maybe the truth was that though it wasn't yet an overwhelming victory, it could be turned into one. Their wall had been cracked at the first blow. If the people followed this up immediately they might find the whole political setup had been broken and would topple into ruin. Their retreat might go into a rout if the people pressed them quickly and vigorously.

But how did you make the people do that? That was the immediate question. Maybe Mr. Utting would know. Maybe he and Winn ought to go see Mr. Utting in the light of this development.—Or maybe the people would do it themselves, spontaneously, instinctively—

"Good morning, young ladies and young gentlemen."

He laid his briefcase on the desk and, gazing off over their heads, began fishing his watch and chain out of his waistcoat pockets. He remembered the morning before when he hadn't been able to

guess what their response would be; there was no apparent difference in them today; maybe they would surprise him again.—“Well, what do you think about it?” he said, purposely enigmatic.

They looked back at him. Some of them began to look at each other. After a long silence somebody said, “About what, Professor?”

“About what!”

One of them mumbled, “He means that arrest,” then said aloud, “I thought my papa said he apologized.”

George twisted the stem of the watch. “Does that make it all right?”

He broke into the controversy he now regretted starting and brought them back to the history of America.

When the bell screamed through the long halls at ten after twelve for second recess George set out down the corridor toward the faculty room half decided to call Winn now if the booth was free. He was impatient to talk to him, though he hardly knew why; he supposed it was partly curiosity, to find out what had happened last night, but that wasn’t as important now as deciding what immediate move they could make to take advantage of Buden’s retreat. That was not a decision easy to reach in a phone conversation, particularly when he was not at all clear in his own mind as to what was best to do. He wondered if maybe he hadn’t begun to be a little uneasy, to want the reassurance of knowing Winn was still there—

In the faculty room Coffey was sitting on the arm of a chair talking in his high-pitched voice to Harry Hall at the window. George heard him say, “Smart,” with a shake of his head, the word spoken as if by the cigarette smoke which he expelled at the same time. He looked round at George; “Did you read it, George?”

Did he read it!—He sat on the edge of the table and dug in his coat for his cigarettes. “I don’t know how ‘smart’ I think it was. What difference does it make whether they say they’re sorry or not? Of course they’re sorry. If you catch me breaking into your house I’m going to be sorry too—”

“It’s smart because it takes the wind out of people’s sails.”

"People can see through that as easily as you and I can."

Hall stretched his arms up straight above his head and twisted them one way then the other: "People don't see so good, George."

"This whole thing, as I see it," Coffey pointed the ash of his cigarette at them, "rests on public indignation. Nothing in the world can be done without that—"

"All right," George said impatiently. "The public's indignant. Have you ever seen as many letters in the paper before?"

"I've never seen as many letters with no names signed to them—"

"Maybe so, but there's plenty of indignation." He fingered the change in his pocket trying to isolate a nickel.

"That was yesterday," Hall said to the windowpane. "They'll change their tune now, George, and if you're jingling your money because you want to lay a bet—"

Coffey popped the cigarette into his mouth. "I'll bet there won't be any more letters at all."

Hall turned round. "Did you see the one about a week ago? It, was under *Speaking the Public Mind*, you know. This is exactly what it said because I'll never forget it. It said, 'Dear Editor: Wish to say Brenda Breeze is my favorite in the funnies and second is Red Ryder and Little Beaver. Yours truly.'—That's speaking the public mind."

He laughed with them through a feeling the laugh was in some way partly on him. "Well, as a teacher, I'm certainly not the man to say there're no fools in the world. But if people think this apology makes everything all right, then—somebody'll just have to diagram it for them."

Coffey stood up with a laugh, threw his cigarette in the fireplace and started out of the room. At the door he turned round and leaned one hand on the sill: "You know what the nigger said to the circus man when the tigers got away. The circus man called the nigger over and said, 'Somebody's got to get them cats.' And the nigger said, 'Somebody else. Not me.'"

He left and George smiled after him weakly. "There're plenty of fools in the world but not all of them are fools at the same time."

Hall opened a pocketknife and sliced carefully through a fingernail that was bothering him. "George, you can't fool all the people all the time but you can fool *enough* people all the time. The ones you can't are a minority and in a democracy the majority is what counts." He closed the knife and dropped it in his pocket. "Let's get that coke."

He thought he would wait until he got home to call Winn.

. . . It was two-twenty-five by his watch when he sat down on the hard chair by Mrs. D'Antel's apple-green telephone table and called the number that had lodged itself tight in his memory with no volition on his part,—like the sandspurs in an old field leaping out at the first pair of innocent trousers—

"Mac and Jack, Mac talking."

"Mac, let me speak to Jack, will you?"

"Professor?"

"Yes."

"Jack ain't here, Professor."

"Well—er—" He didn't know quite what to say. "I asked him to wait. Did he leave a message for me?"

"No, he didn't."

"Has he been there today?"

"He left a little before two."

"Tell him to call me when he comes in," and he gave Mrs. D'Antel's number. He supposed there was a good chance Winn wouldn't get the message, as he evidently hadn't got the other, but there was nothing lost by leaving it for him.

He went downstairs to his rooms and washed his hands in the water that had already lost some of its tepid summer softness that you could hardly feel. He laid his glasses upside down on the window sill and washed his face. It was strange, in a way, Winn hadn't called him anyhow; though he could really imagine plenty of good explanations,—including the obvious one that he himself had been in class all morning. It was possible, also, Winn didn't want to talk on the filling-station phone. He might have left on purpose just before George called. Or said he had left; he doubted if the boy

was a purist in such details. As he climbed the stairs again to the dining room the thought struck him that Winn might be planning to come by the apartment; certainly that would be much more satisfactory than a phone conversation. They ought to sit down together and figure this thing out,—sit down, preferably, with Mr. Utting—

Passing the telephone again, he hesitated, then grabbed the book and fanned through it hurriedly for Mr. Utting's number; he knew Bertha was going to look at him coldly if he was more than another minute in getting to his chair but—

“May I speak to Mr. Utting, please?”

“Mr. Utting is out of town.”

“Out of town?”

“Is this Mr. Cliatt?”

“Yes. Could you tell me when he'll be back?”

“No, sir, I couldn't. He's in New York on business—”

Well,—so Mr. Utting was out of town.—But that meant that and nothing more. Still he wished he hadn't gone away, with all this in the air—

There was nothing else he could do now then. He could just forget the whole thing for a while,—which was exactly what he had been wanting to do for forty-eight hours, wasn't it? He could call her now with a clear conscience. What difference did all this make anyway? The leaves were turning purple on the sweetgum trees, blue-violet, crimson, yellow; and a few green ones that would be gone in another week. Walk with her now, while the green ones still held.—Maybe he could explain to her, and to himself also, incidentally, why he had had to do this other thing,—even at the risk of looking like a fool—at the certainty. Why did a man of conscience always look like a fool?

He bowed agreeably to the tables right and left as he hurried to his own by the window. He wondered if any of Mrs. D'Antel's flock had written the newspapers; certainly the even overcast of talk in the room didn't sound disturbed; it seemed to be the same sort of talk as last week, before anyone had ever heard of Jack Winn.—But weren't they merely waiting for someone to give them their direc-

tion? A few editorials now, a few more letters from the citizens, a few talks by businessmen before the civic clubs, a few meetings of Local This and Local That of organized labor, and the people could lift out the keystone of this evil arch of bossism and build again—

But he had omitted a step in there, hadn't he? Building again wasn't so simple; if the people were confused about the way to get rid of this evil how could they ever accomplish the infinitely harder job of building again? His answer to that was, well, they had done it once, hadn't they? It might not have turned out just as they expected but they had built,—they had blazed their way into the wilderness, they had fought and died, they had established their forts and churches and academies and courthouses, they had cut trails and widened them to lanes and straightened them to roads and leveled them to concrete highways, they had written laws and constitutions and city charters,—but right along in here was the half-formed question that stopped him each time he thought of it, stopped him as the night watchman at the cotton warehouse is stopped by the half-formed suspicion he smells smoke. If they had built it, why couldn't they change it? Was there more to this arch than you could see? On the surface it looked merely as if a company of ignorant men had made for themselves a profitable profession out of governing the people; but that would have been a sort of county-fair arch you could push over any time you felt like it. The strength of ignorance wasn't enduring. But there was nothing flimsy about this arch; apparently it could stand up against all the financial might of the banks and the insurance companies and the utilities and the labor unions; apparently these great organizations were grovelling on their knees, powerless before the whims of a handful of ignorant politicians. Try to tumble this arch and what would you find? That was the wisp of smoke that, off and on, kept blowing back to him—

"There's a gentleman downstairs in your apartment, Mr. Cliatt. Said, don't hurry; he'd wait."

He jumped as if Bertha's whisper had been a shout. "Thank you. I'll go now."

"Ice cream for dessert, Mr. Cliatt."

He shook his head with a smile at her tone of complicity.

As he strode out of the room and descended the stairs the idea became fixed in his mind that it must be Winn. He hardly knew whether he was more relieved at having the opportunity at last of talking the matter over or the fact that Winn's being there cleared away from his thoughts a lot of little suspicions he had been scarcely aware of until now that they had vanished.

He opened his door off the basement hall and walked into the living room. Mr. Dobit was sitting in the rocking chair by the window.

"I hope you don't mind, George—"

"Glad to see you," he said, not sure his voice hid all his disappointment.

"I knocked and rang and—then I just hollered at the cook and walked in—"

"All right, all right. You want a cigarette, tobacco—"

"George, I've heard—and you needn't ask me how, because I'm not going to tell you—I've heard you're interested in this Winn thing that's been all over the front pages."

"Of course I am."

"Well, of course we all are. If they can do this to us—"Then I must indeed be a fool if I do not know that in the Athenian state any man can suffer anything.' But!—Bring up a chair. I'm sort of bothered about this business."

George sat down in the old leather chair with the movable back. "I'm a little bothered too—"

"George, I don't want you to get too deep in it.—Now, wait a second; let me get this off my mind." He balanced his elbow on the arm of the rocking chair and moved his white hand back and forth; "It isn't just that I want you to keep out of trouble. Getting in trouble's all right if you can accomplish something by it. But can you? You know what happened to me; I'd have no regrets about that if it accomplished anything, but I don't believe it did—"

"I'm not getting into it. I'm just giving Winn what little help I can—"

"When my paper came in the mail this morning and I saw that apology I had a mind to call you at school. That apology makes all the difference in the world, George."

"Why!" he exclaimed with an impatient shake of his head at having to hear all this again.

"George, public indignation's your only weapon—"

"I know what you're going to say, but if enough of us speak up now and show the public this apology's got nothing to do with it—"

"You can't show 'em that." He slapped the arm of his chair. "You can tell them, but they won't believe it; not really, not in their hearts. It won't register with them; it's just a dry intellectual concept. An apology has emotion in it. They know how he feels. The man has apologized; what more can he do?"

"Why, anybody who gives the thing a second thought—"

"That's exactly it! People don't think, George. It isn't they're bad; they just don't think. They feel sometimes. They get mad. But they don't stay mad,—any more than my horse, Ben, stays mad with me. They've pranced round now and they're ready to calm down."

"I don't believe it," he said with a quiet vehemence, wondering for an instant in the depths of his consciousness if the vehemence wasn't directed also at quieting his own suspicions Mr. Dobit might be right.

"If trying to apologize could be made ridiculous you might get a public response again. There's emotion in comedy—"

"I don't see a laugh in it."

"What I'm trying to say, George, is the case has been weakened and—I don't want to see you connected with it. Let Winn do it. Advise with him if you think it'll do any good but—"

"Of course, I really hardly know what to advise him. I've been trying to get in touch with him but I hardly know what I want to tell him—"

"All right." Mr. Dobit hitched his rocking chair round a few inches. "Now here's something occurred to me.—There's a grand jury in session at the Courthouse. It's a good grand jury too. My

old friend Tom Grinnell is foreman and Tom's as straight as they come. He's a dentist. It's always hard to intimidate a dentist; if he's retired it's practically impossible. Of course a grand jury hasn't got any legal power. But it's got a lot more power than you have, George. They can't do anything to Buden, but they can call him up before them and ask him some questions; they can look into it. And they can present their findings to the court in a public statement—"

He wondered if there wasn't something in it. If the grand jury would call Buden in, question him, then recommend his dismissal, that might accomplish as much as anything the Civil Service Commission would have done. And also, if the grand jury's tone was firm enough, maybe the Commission would be forced to act. And wasn't it possible, too, if public indignation was really being cooled down by the apology, the grand jury's recommendations would revive it—

"Now Winn can go before the grand jury in complete confidence. There are some political henchmen on it but his testimony would be confidential and—"

"When would he have to go before them?"

"Well, there isn't much time.—This is what I've done, George. I called Tom Grinnell at home just before I came here; I asked him how long his jury would be in session. He said they were trying to wind up their business so they could adjourn this afternoon, late this afternoon—"

"Today?"

"It'll have to be right now, George. It's a little after three—"

George got up and extinguished his cigarette with a blow that hurt his fingers. He felt like cursing everybody connected with the thing. "I don't know whether I can get hold of him," he said with what he knew was a foolish exasperation. "He wasn't at the filling station a while ago—"

"All he does is go down to the Courthouse, knock at the jury-room door and ask for Mr. Grinnell. Tom said he'd be glad to see him." Mr. Dobit stood up and began looking round for his hat.

"Now I've got to go. I've got a meeting with my 'parents' at quarter to four.—I just wanted to mention this to you in case you thought it was a good idea."

"I think it's a good idea all right,—if I can catch Winn."

"Where's your phone? Let's see if we can get him."

"It's upstairs. Have you got a minute?"

"No, but lead the way."

They went upstairs and he dialled the filling station. After two or three rings a blithe voice shouted, "Mac and Jack, Mac talking."

"Mac, this is George Cliatt. Is Jack convenient to the phone?"

"Jack ain't ever come in, Professor—"

"Well, where can I find him? This is important."

"I don't know, sir, unless he's back over yonder in the field—"

"What field?"

"There's something going on over yonder by the canal—"

"If he gets back tell him to wait for me; I'm coming down there."

He hung up and turned to Mr. Dobit. "Easiest thing to do is crank up the car and run down there and see him.—I'll drop him at the Courthouse myself."

"I wish I could take you, George, and save your gas but I just can't do it—"

"I've got enough to make out."

"Good luck to you—"

He was glad the old man couldn't take him because he already had another idea. As soon as Mr. Dobit had gone he went back to the telephone. He started dialling the number he knew so well, stopped suddenly in the middle of it, hung up, fanned through the directory to "Cassidy." He had to see her; if she could go with him it wouldn't take a minute to stop and pick her up. When they had left Winn they could go somewhere; up the canal, down the canal, —any place. It didn't matter; just to have her there beside him again—

He told Jane Cassidy who he was and asked if she could find Allen for him.

"She was here just a second ago on the way to the Post Office.—Hold it."

In a minute he was speaking to her, hanging there in suspense for a long instant that maybe she couldn't go, or wouldn't; then he felt his mind resolve itself into a beautiful relaxation as she said she would wait for him in front of the Post Office.—Take her to see the old White House; it didn't matter where they went—



IN A STRAGGLING, somber column Bruce led the platoon after Sergeant Coffey on a wide detour: back to the jet current of Rae's Creek, down the creekside, crossing the Upper Road, to the river, along the river, and finally up the gentle slope in front of the house. Now and then Coffey signalled back to halt and went ahead while they waited, head-hanging and silent, among the spicy pines. At the halt on the slope Coffey was gone only a short time; he returned with one of Willis's corporals to lead them in. "This man's the outpost—"

Crouching in the red gully by the road and following Willis's grimy finger pointing proudly at one after another of the green-coated bodies of eleven Florida Rangers sprawled over the ruts, at three noncommissioned Regulars in red, his spirits began to lift again: maybe his failure had not been so complete after all. If the reinforcements from the fort had really numbered two hundred, as Willis guessed, "not counting the Creeks, which were harder to reckon, advancing mostly through the woods," it meant that though failing, his attack had drawn off enough of the fort's garrison to clear the way for Clarke and McCall. That was the heart of his mission. If that had succeeded, did his failure to take the house matter very much? Wasn't it, indeed, better that he hadn't? He couldn't have held the house against so many.—He would bury what had happened without too much regret; live problems lay ahead.

The first one lay in the fact that his men, whom he and Willis figured must now number seventy-six, were faced with, possibly, three hundred. If the officer in the house, whoever he was, realized quickly enough this was not the main attack on Fredericksville he could easily send back a force of a hundred, which might enable Browne to hold Fort Frederick; he would still be retaining strength enough at the house to defy anything Bruce could do.

Another possibility, however, worried Bruce more and that was the chance the officer would hold his entire force at the house and make a prompt sortie against them. If this was done at once Bruce wouldn't have the faintest hope that Clarke could secure the fort and come to his relief in time. That would be a failure to make the earlier one pale in comparison.

"And no word from the others?" he said to Willis, nodding in the direction of the settlement but knowing quite well if there had been news from there that would have been the first thing Willis would have told him—shouted to him in a burst of joy—

Willis shook his head. He had heard some firing from the settlement at about eight-twenty. Not very much; nothing to indicate the attack was getting under way. A few more stray shots a little before a quarter to nine. That was all, and it was now nearly eleven. At eight-thirty he had sent a man along the riverbank to see what he could find out; if something had delayed the attack, the man was to try to get through to Colonel Clarke with the message that the garrison at the fort had been weakened by at least two hundred and fifty. "The man is still out."

Bruce started to tell him he should have sent two men, but he knew the answer would be the quite logical one that they needed every man they could muster. He told Willis he thought they could be sure of one thing: "Something may have delayed the attack, but it hasn't been driven off; you'd have heard more than a few stray shots." He didn't feel like mentioning the obvious fact that it would probably be several hours after the attack should begin before Colonel Clarke would be able to send help; that wasn't the sort of thought the senior officer sowed—

He appointed Coffey to the command of Carter's platoon until there could be an election. Then he moved about among them all, spreading them out as far as he dared, encouraging them to appear as numerous and formidable as possible, talking to them as steadfastly as he could through his own awareness that it would be difficult to deceive the officer in the house for very long. Sooner or later, maybe in an hour, maybe in two or three, a patrol of Creeks would be sent to investigate and their true strength would become known. Then, if everything was not to be lost, he would have to have help.

He was leaning against the steep side of the gulley, watching an innocent-looking crack in the shutters of an attic window while Coffey, at his elbow, pushed the long, rubbed barrel of his rifle tenderly between the blades of a tuft of broomsedge. He knew it must be nearly noon because the shingles on the roof were shadowless and smooth from the high sun. Like a varnish coloring all his thoughts was the consciousness that there had been no further firing from the town; something unexpected had surely happened, though he tried to put out of his mind the futile speculation as to what it might be. Then he saw a corporal crawling toward him along the bottom of the wash and he thought Willis had probably sent the man to tell him the messenger had returned. The man stood up and without any ceremony said, "Colonel Clarke wants to see you."

His first apprehensive thought was that some disaster had overtaken Clarke far off on the Middle Road; that the attack on the fort had been abandoned—

He followed the boy down the hill and in a minute saw a lean figure sitting hunched-up on a log, his leathery old face one great snaggle-toothed grin.

The old man grabbed his hand, slapped him on the shoulder and put his arm round his neck. "We whipped 'em, boy! We've got cannon, powder, balls, shoes, blankets, fresh meat,—d'ye hear me!"

The forts were theirs, both of them. Almost without a shot. Fort Frederick fell in fifteen minutes, Grierson in ten. There was hardly a garrison at Frederick: one company of Rangers, as a guard over

the Indian presents. The rest had been drawn off to the White House. The first minute he got, he had snatched a fresh British horse and ridden ahead to tell them. "Our casualties, all told, didn't come to a dozen."

Bruce could feel his eye sockets beginning to swim with the relaxing tears as Clarke went on, buoyant as a child. "We control the Savannah River. Cruger'll have to abandon Ninety-Six, or get his supplies overland from Charleston. We're dismounting one of the six-pounders. Martin's bringing it up soon as the road's clear. One ball from that through the roof of this house and, burn my boots!—"

"What of Browne and Grierson—"

The old man pointed his crooked finger dramatically up the hill: "Colonel Browne," he pronounced, his eyes flaming, "and Colonel Grierson are, both the scoundrels, yonder in Weatherford's Trading Post!"

The clear joy that gripped Bruce's throat seemed to raise echoes of all the other joys in his life, long buried under the noxious scrap pile of war, but still alive,—the church bells throbbing in waves over the salt creeks at New Inverness; a young woman once, in a white shop in Savannah, standing in the midst of bonnets and mantuas and the boxes of fresh soap from London that smelled so naked, her hair craped up with two rolls at each side; opening his eyes in the fire-lit cabin and gazing up, straight and speechless, into the eyes of Mrs. Carter—who was now Thursa—

Colonel Clarke sat down again on the log and chewed at the end of a tobacco-twist until a piece of it came off; then he went on, his voice in the deeper tone of prayer, "The Almighty, John, has laid a great victory in the palm of our hands. McCall will make secure, leave a guard detachment over the prisoners and bring up the rest. By sundown we'll number nearly four hundred. Tomorrow morning, with God's gracious will, we can force a complete surrender—"

AFTER THE MORNING dried off a little bit Wanzo told his Rosa he had a good deal more than half a mind to let the stump go. "What's a matter with you, Wanzo? Ain't you feelin' good?"

"Ain' worth killin'."

"Go on get the light'ood stump."

"There's something about that stump I don't know what it is."

"Get the stump, Wanzo," she said and she didn't sound like maybe.

Of course he didn't want to let it go either, not after he had put all that work on it, with the hole nearly up to his pants pockets; a few side roots as big as his arm that wouldn't come to anything with a sharp axe and then the old tap root, and that was all. It wasn't anything, maybe, about the stump itself; the stump would be all right once he got it away from where it was. It was where the stump was,—under the high canalbank, a damp foggy sort of place, with the thick water boooming in the raceway and the ice-colored mill windows; it was being down there with all that after first dark.

But there wasn't any reason he had to dig it out in the dark; if he went there as soon as he had dinner he might have it out by four o'clock. He could be all the way home with it by the time night fell.

When he had hooked up the mule, smacked her a sharp cut over the rump with the plowline and rattled out into the Upper Road the day had turned off cloudy and dim. He had a feeling in his back there was rain up the river somewhere, racking down the valley at a take-your-time pace, but racking right on down for all that. It didn't feel like a heavy rain, but a backhanded, wet, floating sort of rain. He would a lot rather have had the sun shining. He was glad to see the Reverend's automobile parked in front of the Mission. "Man! Do you need the Lord Jesus Christ!" it said to him. "Do, Lord!" he said and pulled the mule across the old car

tracks and into the dirt road past the filling station. It felt more like rain under the canalbank than on the hill.

But there was the stump just exactly as he had left it Monday night. He half expected to see it different somehow. It wouldn't have surprised him for the stump not to be there at all; that was the sort of place it was. Or for the hole to be filled up,—with broomsedge growing on it. He pulled up beside the hole and looked over into it. Everything was perfectly all right.

He got down and took out the mule and tied her to the wheel. Then he unpinned his coat and laid it on the bed of the wagon. He was glad he would be able to see what he was doing; the light was gray and a lot sadder than sunshine but there was plenty of light to see by.

He climbed over the dirt pile and lowered himself into the hole, the edgy metallic smell of the rosin rising up about him as if his foot had stirred it. He was glad he could look out across the field if he wanted to and see the little cars and buses going up and down Broad Street, glad to hear the fringes of the old hymn coming out of the Mission: "Jesus, Savior, pilot me—" The white stubs where he had cut off the roots last time were covered with a sticky gum and on the dirt beneath each one the ground was wet in a black spot about as big as a dime where it had bled. "Over life's tempestuous sea—"

He struck a root on the side toward the Mission, cut it with three or four heaves of the axe, flung it out of the hole and worked on round the stump, lifting out shovelfuls of earth, turning them over on the dirt pile, digging on down—into somebody else's time, somebody else's territory. On the side toward the canalbank the shovel hit another obstruction and he propped the handle against the stump and reached over on the pile for the axe; he was down pretty deep and he was satisfied it would be just about the last of the side roots. He spit on the calluses in his left hand. "Jesus, Savior, pilot me," he sang in a Sunday mumble, half to himself, paused, took a breath, swung the axe,—"wham!" And off it came. He glanced

down at it, surprised it had come off so easily; but with Jesus and a sharp axe—

He rested a minute on the axe handle, looking up at the ridge of the canalbank above him and the old square chimney of the powder works beyond and the blue mill windows as harmless in the daylight as a blacksnake, though he didn't love blacksnakes either. It gave him a funny feeling to think the level of the yellow water was way over his head; he would have had to look up at a slant to see a boat go by and if anything happened to the canalbank he would sure the Lord be in a mess,—this pearly November day with the rain coming down the river—

He bent over in the hole to throw out the root. He picked it up. It was a funny-looking stick, damp and coated with chilly black dirt. Roots grew into all kinds of funny shapes, burrowing round down there in the dark—with the worms. He had seen roots a little like this before, with feedroots branching off the end like fingers. It made you want to set it back down where you got it from. Or rather, throw it away from you as far as you could throw it,—and not stand there looking at it as if you had hold of a man's arm above his wrist with his fingers curling off there in front of you. And—Do, Lord! there were five of those little feedroots. Not much bigger than cigarettes but—one, two, three, four, five. And—Sweet Jesus! on the middle one was something round looked like a ring,—Do, blessed God!

He opened wide his fingers and stretched them stiff. Then he threw back his head and yelled. And he could hear his yell bounce off the canalbank and go sailing away through the tree limbs like an owl.

He had a sort of dream of running, running across a field that would never end with the broomsage grabbing at his pants legs, running across some old car tracks, up some steps. Then the dream ended in black dark.

When he woke up he was lying on the floor of a porch, panting in short whines, a cold pain in his chest as if he had swallowed a lump of blue ice or a piece of blue mill window. A pale-faced white

man in a black suit was kneeling beside him reading out of a soft-backed book. He heard somebody say, "Pray on, Brother Sampey, I believe the Lord's gonna let him go."

He rolled his eyes up and let them wind in a dreamy course round the enclosing wall of white faces frowning open-mouthed down at him from different heights, close to the floor, high up over him, half-way. Beyond the turned-up toes of his cold boots, beside the man in the black suit, he saw the small face of a boy about ten years old studying him with his purple eyes while Brother Sampey's voice went on in the deep tones of prayer.

Then it suddenly occurred to him he was dead and all these thin-faced white folks were fixing to bury him. He moved his tongue frantically about in his dry mouth and shoved himself up on his hands. He tried to say, "Ain' dead!" but his voice came out in such a croak he wasn't sure they could understand him; it even sounded like a dead man's voice—

Then he remembered the stump and the hole and the thing in his right hand. And his fingers began to shake against the floor and his elbow got weak as water. He sank back on the porch, his chest and shoulders trembling like on a cold morning. He wanted to shut his eyes as tight as he could but he was scared if he did they would sure go on and put him in the hole—

Somebody in the back said, "Give'm a shot of whiskey."

Brother Sampey stopped praying in the middle of a word, gazed accusingly at the book, lifted his head slowly in the direction of the voice, was silent for a long instant. Then he lowered his eyes again and went on. When a tin dipper was passed through the crowd the preacher took it, smelled it, then held it up and blessed it. He lifted Wanzo's head and let him drink a swallow.

In a few minutes Wanzo moved his heavy tongue once more. "Mule," he said.

"What he says?"

He tried again; he wanted to go home. "Where—my—mule?"

"Your mule?" the preacher asked him.

"Yassa. Lemme—go—home."

"What's all this you been saying about a dead man over yonder in the field?"

Wanzo rubbed his right hand against the side of his pants; he could feel the skin of his stomach beginning to shake again. "My—mule."

The preacher lifted his head to the ring of faces. "Somebody go over yonder and get his mule."

The circle widened a little and some of the faces drew back. One man tiptoed away into the house. After a minute's silence the preacher fixed his eyes on the floor and said positively: "Go get his mule for him, somebody."

There was another long silence; nobody said anything, nobody moved. Then the boy with the hollow eyes said, "I'll get his mule."

"Bless you, Doodye!" said the preacher without moving his head. "A little child shall lead them.—Let the boy go."

The circle opened to let Doodye out and the preacher pushed himself up on his feet. "You, Mary; you, Minnie," he nodded at two of the women; "you stay with old nigger." He moved through the group to the steps and stood there looking down at Doodye at the bottom. "I'm going too. I want to see what manner of thing this is the Lord hath wrought."

Doodye skipped out across the sidewalk to the curb. While he waited the preacher closed the Bible in both hands on his chest and started down the steps. A woman behind him pronounced in a monotone: "Jesus, Savior, pilot me—Over life's tempestuous sea," and two or three voices raised the tune tentatively after her.

When the preacher reached the bottom step several in the crowd began to move after him, then several more, then the rest, all but Mary and Minnie. He glanced up at Doodye standing on the curb and waved him on into the street. He announced the next lines in his own deep voice: "Unknown waves before me roll—Hiding rock and treacherous shoal," and the voices behind him took it up.

He followed Doodye straight out into the traffic. A horn blew at the boy but Doodye didn't turn his head. Brakes squealed. One car swirled round him and went on. "Christ and compass come from

"Thee," said the preacher; "Jesus, Savior, pilot me." And the traffic parted to each side like the waters of the Red Sea and waited while the procession crossed.

When they turned into the dirt road past the filling station Winn came out of the office with Mac and stood there watching them with his fingers in the hip pockets of his khaki trousers. Mac said it looked like a baptism. They walked over to a straggler with a blue-gray stubble on his cheeks. "What's cooking, chum?" Winn asked him.

"That's Reverend Sampey McCall."

"O.K., chum; what then?"

"Reverend's going over here to see about a petrified man."

Winn looked at Mac. "Says which!"

"The Lord's wrought a petrified man over here, brother—"

"If Reverend's looking for a petrified man," Mac said, "he ought to been here Monday morning and see Winn—"

"Wondrous Sovereign of the sea," spoke the preacher, "Jesus, Savior, pilot me—"



A RELIEF PARTY stumbled past so close to where Bruce was sleeping that the sound broke the brittle crust of his unconsciousness and he snapped bolt upright, jabbing about on the ground for the rifle,—which was the way he had waked up for so many years now he couldn't imagine how it might feel not to wake in alarm. He seemed to wake up more and more easily,—as if the farther you climbed from basic rifleman, the more lightly you slept—

He realized in an instant it was only the guard and he lay down again on the pine straw; it must have been the two-o'clock change. It was certainly not the six o'clock; there was no feeling of night-end in the air and even the occasional firing from the forward sentries along the road had a weary perfunctoriness about it as if it came out of the deeps, of lassitude. He closed his eyes; he could sleep a while longer.—Then he heard the sound of digging and he

lifted himself on his elbows to listen. It seemed to come from the top of the hill.

Somebody touched him on the arm. "You hear that, Major?" He listened, remembering then all of a sudden the emplacement Martin was digging in the field for the six-pounder. He mumbled something about Captain Martin and lay down again. The voice whispered, "They're trying to bury 'em all so we can't count 'em." He grunted. Maybe that was it; he simply didn't care, hanging there on the brink of sleep, exhausted and dirty and itching.

But they weren't graves. When morning broke and he crawled behind Coffey up the dim gulley to the sentry post from which he had watched the house yesterday, the whole square of the building seemed to have settled into the top of the hill. Pink and purple and white mounds of fresh clay circled across the front of the house, hiding, from his viewpoint below, the whole of the lower floor up to the sill of the windows. He stood there in silence frowning at the breastworks through the glistening dew of the broomsedge above him on the crest of the wash. The first thought that occurred to him was that Browne had got information about the six-pounder, had realized the house could be battered to pieces and had thrown up the works to protect it as much as possible and to provide a defensive position if the house should be destroyed. Futile though he felt such a hope was, it suggested a determination to resist that caused him at once a certain elation from its acknowledgment of being on the defensive and a certain depression at the prospect of having to dislodge them. As he started to turn away, a stabbing shaft of flame blazed scarlet from a crevice in the mounds and he heard a musket ball whine away into the mulberry grove. He crawled back down the gully and walked away through the twilight toward the sink about the spring where Colonel Clarke had his headquarters.

He felt better in the growing light; his discouragement of last night, when darkness had fallen and McCall and his men had not arrived, now seemed far away. They would come this morning and everything would be all right: Browne showed no sign of surrender-

ing, but he was encircled; a messenger had no doubt gone to Cruger for help, but Ninety-Six was fifty-five miles away; the Americans had lost some men, but there was plenty of ammunition and supplies now,—and above all, there was the six-pounder—

“You any part of an artilleryman, John?” Clarke asked him, sitting on a log beside a pewter mug of coffee, raking the bits of pine needles out of his colorless hair.

He told him he had never fired a cannon in his life.

“Nobody has but Martin.” He picked up the mug with a little shake of his head and started to drink. “But praise the Lord for *one* artilleryman,” he added, half to himself and took a loud sip of the coffee.

Bruce told him about the breastworks but he couldn’t tell whether the old man had heard it before or was thinking about something else. In a minute he lifted his head from the mug and said with a frown, “John, go talk to Martin, if you please. Tell him to go on shoot the damn thing soon as he can—”

Bruce entered the field below the break of the hill and mounted the slope under the shield of the claybanks of the gun emplacement. He leaned over and scrambled into the broad pit.

Everything looked promising enough: Martin had floored it with split pine saplings that rose at an incline toward the rear; the gun was in position, its dull brass muzzle a few feet away from the forward bank and laid to fire through a V-shaped break in the clay. A hamper of shot and two quarter-casks of powder, each stenciled in red with a crown and “G.R.” lay in a shallow ditch at the side.

Martin himself, a round-faced young captain from McCall’s detachment whom Bruce knew only slightly, looked hollow-eyed from lack of sleep and, Bruce guessed, from trying to train a gun crew in an hour or so. He went on with the drill of loading, checking with a strained patience on every move they made, trying to keep them out of each other’s way, from doubling up on one job and leaving another undone. Once the sponger upset his bucket of water and Martin marched to him as if he would strike him then turned away.

One of them said, "Let's us quit foolin' round here, Cap'n, and shoot this thing—"

"Stand from back of that gun!" Martin shouted at the boy, his patience wearing down; "When this gun fires," he explained in a quieter tone, "she's going to run up these logs maybe all the way into that sandbank. If you're behind there—"

"We ain' got to shoot her but once, Cap'n. Them bloodybacks'll come out o' there like bees out a hive."

Martin sent the sponger to get another bucket of water and crossed the pit to where Bruce was standing. "You can't learn a crew to man a gun in an hour," he said in an undertone hoarse from his efforts and from weariness, licking his dry lips. "They put in too much powder or they don't put in enough or they forget to swab it out or they kick over a bucket or they—" He wiped the sweat off his cheeks, looking back at them half-affectionately, half in despair, all of them standing about the weathered gun watching him, almost begging him with their eyes. Then a black-haired boy with an upcountry accent burst out with, "Let 'em have one, Cap'n!"

Bruce told him Colonel Clarke wanted him to begin firing as soon as he was ready—

"We're as ready, I reckon, as we're ever going to be," Martin said, looking at the hamper of shot. Then he lifted his head: "All right, boys. We're going to fire this one."

They smacked their hands and jumped about like children. "Look out, you lobster-scoun'els! You first-born sons o'hell!"

Martin walked back to his post over the sticky saplings. He spoke quietly to the sponger, "Get your water bucket back. You'll be falling over it again, first thing you know—"

The man picked it up by the rope handle and set it farther away, glancing round for approval.

Martin called them to attention, gave the pit a final scrutiny and shouted a husky, "Load!" Bruce could see him trying to watch every move they made. "Measure out your powder; that's not

enough. All right, Number Two, get your shot, don't stand there like a knot on a stump—"

When the rammer had seated the shot Martin directed them in rolling the carriage to the front of the pit; then he put a man on the rope to each side of the gun trail and sighted it himself, screwing the elevating spindle up and down until he was satisfied. Then he poured a scanty palmful of powder into the priming hole, stepped to the rear of the pit and lit a long splinter of lightwood. "Stand away!"

Bruce watched him walk resolutely up beside the breech and he felt himself beginning to squint; he would have liked to put his fingers in his ears but was ashamed to. Then Martin, without any more ado, stretched out his arm and laid the black rosinous base of the flame on the powder.

Bruce felt the earth beneath his boots quiver as when a felled pine, in his memory somewhere, had once roared with a great drum into the brush; the logs of the platform screeched under the wheels; a high-pitched whistle rang between his ears and died away. He stared vainly into the expanding turmoil of yellowish smoke, trying to mark the impact of the shot, though the house and all the surrounding works had vanished beyond the rolling cloud. Then one of the gun crew let out, at last, an anguished scream and, turning toward the man and the fragment of his arm, Bruce saw the body of Martin, its head blown cleanly off, tumbling and jerking in a spasm at the corner of the pit, the blazing torch, flung out of its hand, flaming in the hamper of shot beside the open powder casks.

He leaped for the torch and thrust it into the sandbank, then stood there glaring stupidly at the spouting body and the ragged muzzle of the gun ripped open like the frayed end of a firecracker. A ball from the house kicked a sprinkle of stinging sand against his cheek and brought him to his senses—



HE SAW HER through the windshield from a long way off, sitting on the wall at the Post Office, a brown-red brimless saucer of a hat on the crown of her head, her feet crossed, her hands together shuttling at a piece of knitting that only her fingers seemed conscious of, and he felt as if he recognized her not only with his eyes but his whole body as though the sight of her changed the pressure of the air or the temperature. And he thought again of how she never seemed to touch one note in him but several, though they were all different this time from when he had first seen her,—the minute standoffishness of the hat and the color of her lipstick, with the peculiar intimacy of the knitting, as if saying, “For everyday purposes one must *seem*, but after all one *is* too”; not that the knitting was any more true of her than the hat and the lipstick but that it suggested a different part of her life. It reminded him again of how the reality of her always appeared to him to shine through her seeming,—almost as the form of her body, the line of her breasts and hips and legs, was apparent through her clothes, as her manner, the flow of expressiveness out of her eyes, brought to her features, in themselves not beautiful, a living pulse of actuality far more attractive to him than the mechanized chic and glamor of the usual feminine ideal.—She smiled at him when she recognized the car, which he thought must indeed be unmistakable, tucked the knitting bag under her arm and hopped down off the wall.

“I knew it was going to be wonderful to see you,” he said, “and, Lord, how wonderful it is! I wish I could describe it to you.”

“You don’t have to.” She sat down close beside him and piled the knitting in her lap; “You don’t have to at all.—I was sorry to say meet me here but the truth is—well—” She hesitated and he looked at her profile and then at the brown-red hat on her dark hair as she turned her face away; then she asked him, as they drove off, in a different tone, “What have you been doing since I saw you?”

“The truth is—what?”

"How do you like meeting me at the United States Post Office, Summerville Branch?"

"I like it fine, I like it just fine—"

"You don't think a little less of me for sneaking off—"

"Listen. The truth is what?"

"Oh," she shook her head, "things at home. They think I'm not behaving quite right—for a widow, their son's widow. And sometimes I wonder too. But—oh, I'm glad to see you. Where are we going? Do I take too much time from your work? If I do I'll sit perfectly still and won't say a word, because I think you're a fine man and I think you have a great future and I want you to write your thesis and get your Ph.D. or your WPB or your PWA or—whatever it is you want I want you to have it."

"If you stick with me I may even try for a PWA *cum laude*—"

"If that's what you want we'll get it for you. It may take a while but we'll get it. In the mean time, why shouldn't you be Principal of the Academy or Superintendent of Schools or—"

"Or at least get a raise in pay.—Do you remember the day the fuse burnt out?"

"Yes!" She laughed at the thought of it.

"Knowing you has made the lights burn again for me. The metaphor's not really poetic enough but it's true."

She took his hand in hers, smiling at it; "That's sweet of you."

"Maybe I wouldn't have tried to do something about Jack Winn if you hadn't started the current flowing in me again."

"You mean I'm responsible for that!"

"I think it's quite possible."

She lifted her eyes in front of them. "That's a pretty ironical state of affairs, don't you think?"

"You have made the world luminous and clear." When they came to Broad Street he said, "I've got a little job to do, then we'll be free. It'll only take a few minutes."

She looked at him skeptically, not saying anything. When he told her he was going to pick up Winn and drop him by the Court-house she was silent for a second longer, then her manner changed

back again and she said, "Well, if that's what you want we'll get that for you too."

"We've arranged for him to talk to the grand jury and I just want to be sure he gets there."

She glanced down at the knitting bag then up again. "I don't know what a grand jury is but it sounds very handsome."

"I don't know either. But one thing it can do is investigate and report what it finds. If Winn tells them some of the things he's told me and they find they're true, which I don't doubt, the grand jury can point out to people what's behind all this—"

"But," she squeezed the ball of yarn in her fingers and released it. "Oh, nothing."

"But what?"

"But, darling, why do you think people care?"

"When they understand, they care." He had a feeling of melancholy, sensing the shoal on which they had drifted before.

"It looks to me," she said with an exasperated smile, "as if all they wanted was to be left alone to make money and get children."

She took his hand again and said in a different voice, "Where do we find this boy?"

"Right there at the bottom of the hill."

"You're awfully stubborn, aren't you?"

He laughed. "It won't take ten minutes."

He swung the car out of Broad Street on to the stained concrete of the filling station, got out and went to the door of the office. Mac was sitting on the edge of a chair at the desk turning the dials on a plastic radio: "—and nineteen of our bombers failed to return to their—"

"Hey, Professor." He went on twisting the knob until he struck a lilting dance tune, then he stood up. "Jack came in here a minute ago. Lemme see ain't he back here." He called his name and went to an inside door leading into a dim room lined with oil drums and black batteries and a few paper-wrapped tires in a rack against the wall. George followed him through the half-dark toward the rec-

tangle of gray afternoon beyond a back door. "I don't know where in the world Jack's gone."

George felt like cursing out of sheer exasperation. "Did you give him my message?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I told him you were coming. Course you didn't say *when* you were coming. Maybe he went back over there in the field. See that little bunch of people over under the canalbank." He stepped out of the door, put his fingers to his teeth and released an ear-splitting whistle. Then, waiting a moment, he grinned back at George. "They say they got a petrified man over there."

"Petrified man?"

"They ain't dug him out yet. Guy's under a light'ood stump."

"I'd say it was most unlikely," George said, watching the group in the field. Then he turned on Mac. "Look here, I've got to get hold of Winn."

"I'll run over there see if I can find him." He asked George to look out for the station a minute and set out at a trot across the weeds to the dirt road.

George stood gazing after him in a blank exasperation. Winn was avoiding him. He wondered if he hadn't suspected that for some time and been trying not to admit it to himself. Hadn't he really known it since—well, not since any particular moment he could name perhaps, but gradually becoming conscious of the grains of sand piling up in the balances—

But the immediate question was not whether Winn's attitude had changed, or why, or when; it was what was he going to do if he couldn't find Winn, and find him right away. The grand jury was getting ready to adjourn. If they adjourned without hearing Winn, —wasn't it really possible the people might let the whole thing blow over? He was beginning to think it was possible.

He looked out at the group in the field. He couldn't distinguish Mac now and he guessed he must be moving about among them. There weren't more than twenty-five or thirty in the crowd; Mac could tell at a glance whether Winn was there. In a minute either two of them would be leaving the group—or one; if Mac came back

alone, then what? Throw in the sponge, wash his hands of it? What was all this to him anyhow?—He could hear, beneath the tune on the radio in the office, a faint wail of singing coming in on the damp air across the field. He was conscious of a mist of rain on his face and he moved back into the doorway.

There was a voice on the radio now repeating the news bulletin. “—our losses were nineteen bombers. Across the Pacific, heavy fighting continues—”

Maybe he was taking all this a little too seriously; wasn’t it merely an intellectual sort of romanticism to find any relationship between what happened out there and incidents here at home,—between death and the risk of death, and the risk of such petty things as embarrassment and inconvenience—

Then he saw two figures leave the little group and start in along the road and he stared at them, the expression on his face almost one of anger as he watched them, afraid it might turn out not to be Winn after all. But one of them had a familiar-looking, easy, unhurried gait—

George set out through the red-orange broomsedge toward the road as he had seen Mac do. Maybe the boy hadn’t been avoiding him; young people were often careless. Didn’t the fact that Winn was willing to come back now and talk to him, listen to him, prove the boy hadn’t had any important motive behind what he had done? —or failed to do—

As he came closer to them he saw they were talking, Winn laughing, moving his hands about. Then he saw Winn glance up, evidently recognize him and touch Mac on the sleeve; they stopped talking and walked on in silence. Twenty-five or thirty yards away Mac turned off across the field toward the filling station. Winn called cheerfully, “Hey, P’fessor! What’s on your mind?” stopping in the middle of the road, putting his fingers in his hip pockets, waiting for George to come up.

George went straight to the point; their time was running out. He told him about the grand jury, about being afraid, unless something was done at once, people might be tricked into letting the

whole thing drop. "That apology doesn't mean a damn thing. Except it shows you've got 'em on the run. But you've got to follow it up right now or that apology may change the way people think about it. The jury's going to adjourn this afternoon but if you can get there in the next half-hour they'll listen to you. I've got my car here and I'll take you right down to the Courthouse and you can give them the whole story—"

"Lordamussy, P'fessor!" Winn smiled at him good-naturedly; "Lemme think a minute.—You know what they doing over there? They getting ready to dig up a petrified man—"

"You'll be back in an hour,—and you won't miss any petrified man either, because the chances are—"

"I've seen his hand; it's heavy as a rock. Come on over here a minute, lemme show you something—"

"Look here. We've got to go down there right now. I tell you they're getting ready to adjourn."

Winn looked down at the ground and stirred a rock with the toe of his shoe; then he raised his head with a little smile that came and went. "Listen, P'fessor." He paused, leaned over and picked up the rock. "I hate to disappoint you but I can't go down there with you." He wiped the wet dirt off the rock. "First place, I can't do anything without talking to Mr. Utting and Mr. Utting's gone to Atlanta or New York or some place—"

"This won't affect any charges you bring before the Civil Service Commission. This will help all that. This will tell people about it again; the grand jury publishes its findings, you know. If they look into this thing and come out with a strong recommendation it'll be a big help with public opinion when you go to court—"

"P'fessor, you know how mad he got when we did something without talking to him." Winn shook his head: "No, *sir!*

George looked at him for a minute unable to say anything. He could feel the cool mist of rain falling on his cheeks. "But, good Lord, man—"

Winn touched him on the arm parenthetically and urged him gently to one side to let a woman pass pulling a toy wagon with a

crippled child in it along the road toward the faint singing. "You don't seem to realize," Winn said, flicking the rock up and down in his hands; "I've got the Japs and the Germans to worry about. My local board's waiting for me first thing tomorrow morning."

"What are you planning to do about all this, then?"

"I haven't got any plans. Uncle Sam's making my plans for me from here on in—"

"I'm not suggesting you do something I wouldn't do myself—"

"P'fessor," he paused, drew back his arm and sent the rock spinning off over the sedge toward the canalbank. "I'm through with this thing. I'm tired of it. There's a first sergeant somewhere right now waiting to slap me on a latrine detail—"

"But after the war, after you come back home—"

"I've got my business to think of; I'll have to be making a living in this town."

"That's what I'm talking about. You'll be getting married, having children; you don't want them to have to put up with—"

"You go talk to the jury, P'fessor," laughing a little. "You know what happened just about as good as I do."

George put his hands in his pockets and looked at him. "If I go get a notary and bring him out here will you make a statement giving all the details—"

"I'm through with it." Winn backed off a step or two. "I've got the krauts and the nips on my mind, P'fessor. You don't have all that to worry you. You getting a free ride."

George felt the blood mounting up into his ears. He had half a mind to reply angrily, but the truth was he wasn't angry except perhaps at himself for wincing. "But if you left a sworn statement that people could use if they wanted to go ahead—"

Winn laughed a little: "You make it then.—P'fessor, people got troubles enough of their own without looking round for more trouble that don't concern them—"

George turned away petulantly. He took a step or two then stopped and came back. He held out his hand. "Well, good luck to you, anyhow." He shook the boy's tough hand and walked off. He

felt depressed but scarcely mad; you couldn't be mad with a man for declining to take a risk—over and beyond the call of duty. A new wail of singing from the field behind followed after him on the damp air:

"Rescue the perishing,  
Care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave—"

For the first time he connected the singing in the field with the Mission,—and the heavy-shouldered preacher and the boy with eyes like purple cups shrieking into his coat collar,—How's your soul, Mr. Cliatt? Oh, I guess it's all right, thank you—

He had come to a fork in the road,—*the* fork. Drop the thing, or carry it alone? The other decisions he had made were merely steps leading to this one; he might have dropped it at several other points. That he hadn't had brought him finally to this; this was a last chance. There would be no dropping it after this. He could still escape now and no harm would have been done; all the other decisions would have been cancelled out. But if he appeared before the grand jury—he would have cast his dice; there would be no calling them back—

He stopped beside a sycamore tree, leaned his hand against the white bark and stood there looking at the ground without seeing it. Why should he take all this on himself? The very most he could hope for, the very greatest success, would be to rouse the people to their danger; they would carry it on then to justice and he would be free to return to his life, his classes, his career. He would have gained nothing for himself at all. Not that he wanted anything, but, just to get the record clear, he might as well acknowledge that even a perfect success would bring him, personally, exactly nothing,—except a sort of mental, moral, ethical feeling of having behaved decently—

If he failed to rouse them,—well, that would be like trying to head off a bank robber and dropping your gun. That would not be a nice spot to be in. He might even lose his job. Or if the Tenure Act should save him he could easily be transferred to one of the

remote county schools. And if he resigned and went somewhere else he would be explaining the resignation for the rest of his life. And what of Allen? You couldn't offer a future like that to a girl.—No, if he failed,—he would have made a thorough job of it—

How much chance of success was there? He goes to the jury, tells his story (it was his, now, or nobody's); they publish their answer in the papers, they accuse, they recommend. Just how likely was it the people would respond? Well, that was the gamble. And he would probably read the chances differently from Mr. Dobit. If the jury made them understand he thought they would respond all right; and the jury would do that if he first made the jury understand,—back on the individual, back on one, Mr. Dobit would love to say. If he could win the jury, the jury could win the people, and the people could win this struggle,—this battle that in one way was so trivial, in another so large.—The chances of success were as good as his own abilities, plus the jury's honesty, plus the people's common sense; he was able enough, he knew that; the jury was honest, Mr. Dobit had said that. The only gamble was on the people's natural intelligence. Well, wasn't that what America had gambled on? And won?

The chances were pretty good then, better than pretty good. If he went on with this thing, took in this foundling laid on his doorstep—

Suppose he didn't. Suppose he stood on his own right to do nothing. Go on home,—and start talking about what should have been done, what "somebody else" should have done; dig around until he found somebody he could blame it on. There was always somebody or something you could blame it on, always a good reason to do nothing if you felt about for it. He had his life to lead as well as Winn; he had other worries, other happinesses. Hadn't he already done more than anyone could reasonably ask of him? Hadn't he done enough to let him drop it right here with a clear conscience? Forget the whole sordid business and take up again the peace and beauty and poetry of being with her,—seeing her, talking to her, going on with her step by step through the enchanted forest, her

eyes filling with the solemn warmth of which he had seen only a hint, the solemn warmth of trust and contentment and love, turning to him steeped in gentleness, candidly herself not her seeming—

No one could blame him. Not even himself.—He lifted up his head and started back rapidly along the road. Across a corner of the field he could see his old car sitting in front of the filling station, the brown-red spot of Allen's hat, like an autumn leaf, visible through a window. He could hear faintly a voice on the radio in the office, as he came closer, talking interminably about something, soap, cigarettes, face powder, bombers, beaches, jungles—

What of the hundreds of thousands, dead in a cause not so different, or worse than dead,—legs, eyes, minds gone? What of himself, when this decision to do nothing had really become a part of him? Growing in him beside all the other decisions to do nothing,—each one planted in such faultless logic, after such nice balancing of risk and reward. Risk of embarrassment, risk of his job, risk of his career? Risk of being named a fool—the hardest risk of all to take, perhaps,—by those needing to justify to themselves their own decisions to do nothing—

He stopped beside the car, dried the wet mist off his face with his handkerchief and got in. He could feel the question in her eyes and he heard himself say, "He's not coming," unable to say it coolly, as much as he wanted to, switching on the ignition and watching the loose-jointed wipers begin fanning across the fogged windshield.

"You mean he won't do it!"

"I'll tell you about it." He gave her a rueful smile at the thought of what she was going to say when he told her, swung the car out into the Upper Road and turned left in front of the White House—



**COLONEL CLARKE** SQUIRTED a short stream of tobacco on to the raw logs of the gun pit and wiped his knuckles across the corners of his thin lips; then he turned his eyes away from the red body and lifted

his bony chin until he was staring vacantly into the heavens arching over the low blue hills of Carolina.

He beckoned Bruce with a roll of his head and they crawled out of the downhill side of the pit. When they were under the break of the hill on the edge of the pines he stood up and leaned one hand against a tree. After a while he said with a declining inflection as if telling himself, "We could haul up another gun but there ain't anybody this side of Gates's army could shoot it."

He bent his head over and wiped his forehead on his sleeve. Then he dropped his hand and straightened his shoulders. "But anyhow, we got Fort Frederick. And we got the greater part of the bastards penned in the house. McCall ought to be here with his fresh men any minute; when they get here we'll just go in there and—the only thing I ain't satisfied about, John, is Cruger." He studied Bruce's face. "How soon you figure he can get here?"

Bruce had figured it a hundred times. It seemed to him whenever his mind relaxed from more immediate problems it fell back on the question of Browne's messenger galloping the track to Ninety-Six and Cruger forcing his marches on the return. It was Saturday morning now; if Browne had sent his man out yesterday as soon as the firing started, he could hardly, at best, have reached Cruger before this morning. Granting that Cruger was ready to march, and the chances were certainly against it, he would need all of today and all of tomorrow to cover the fifty-five miles. He figured they had two full days of grace, and he told Clarke so. "And even if they get here Monday morning they won't be fit to fight—"

"That's just how I figure it too.—But I don't believe in taking unnecessary chances and I'm thinking we better go in there after 'em first minute we can." He gazed off in the direction of the mulberry grove. "First minute McCall gets here to help us—"

He bowed his head as two men stumbled past them bearing Martin's body down the slope and away from the spring, murmured, "God rest your soul!" in a sort of brief earnest obeisance, not so much to Martin now as to death itself, and went on talking: "If he left forty or fifty men back there over the prisoners, and he could do

it with less, he ought to get here with three hundred or more. That'll raise us close to four hundred, and I'm yet to see the day when that ain't enough to whip a thousand Tories."

Bruce didn't dispute him; it was always the fashion in war to talk that way no matter what your eyes told you about organization and training and officers. Clarke was silent a minute, looking off down the hill at the far bank of the tinted river.

Then he turned round to Bruce with decision in his gaze. "Now I wouldn't feel right about going in there without sending Browne a flag. I don't look for 'em to surrender but you can't blink the fact that refusing gives our boys a better feeling about going after 'em. I want to get that detail out of the way right now. And who knows? Maybe they *will* surrender. Even if they know the gun blew up they know we can haul up another one; how they going to tell we don't know the muzzle from the bunghole—"

Bruce shaved off his four-day beard hurriedly at the cool spring, slapped the dust and sand out of his hunting shirt, and made himself as presentable as he could. In less than a quarter of an hour he and a lieutenant named Fargo were squatting behind the forward banks of the gun pit while a sergeant from Willis's platoon with a flag torn out of a once-white shirt waved it to right and left above them on the staff of the sponge. When a white spot appeared at one of the attic windows he and Fargo climbed over the damp clay and set out resolutely up the incline.

The day seemed to him to have suddenly shed its battle tone and become merely an upland farmer's sunny morning in September, with spots of burnt color among the relaxing trees and the warm damp wind off the river and two men striding across the quiet field in silence. The broomsedge was clay-red with streaks of green retreating into the tufts and in one place near the middle he smelled the unmistakable autumn scent of rabbit-tobacco, one of the gray-and-black stalks clipped neatly by a ball and sending up its dry perfume into the clinging odor of powder smoke. Ahead of him the White House, soundless among the orange and purple mounds of new clay, seemed deserted, but as they walked on through the

quiet, dark heads, lined with bands of prime color like the clay, began to rise inquisitively above the earth. He knew quite well that at any moment a musket ball from one of those naked shoulders might crash into his chest, being "the senior officer present"; when the tribes fought they fought to win and one leader was worth a dozen riflemen. He was glad to see the two young men in coats the shade of a cardinal's wing-feather march round an end of the banks and into the field.

He halted halfway to the house and waited while they marched past him with great formality, their buttons every one in place, their fair eyes impenetrable; he faced about, as they did, so that all of them were looking at their own lines. He tried to detect some sign about them, a tear in their uniforms, a smear of dirt or even blood, that might betray what conditions were within the house. But there was nothing; the skin about their eyes was blue with sleeplessness and their lips looked dry and somewhat tense, but on the whole, he thought they were as presentable a pair as you would find on the streets of Charleston or Savannah. He couldn't help admiring their front; they must have had hardly a swallow of water in twenty-four hours—

"I have a message from my commanding officer for Colonel Browne."

One of them said he had authority to accept it.

Bruce told him he wished to deliver the message to Colonel Browne in person, but the young man insisted he would take it.

Bruce wondered, while thinking the voice was certainly not British though it didn't sound like a Georgia voice either,—wondered if Browne could have been wounded, or killed. He saw nothing to do, however, but give the message to the subordinate and he said in the chilly tone with which he might have addressed a wayward pupil, "Colonel Clarke presents his compliments to Colonel Browne and calls on him in the name of humanity to surrender. You have seen a demonstration of our strength. We have cannon to reduce your position in a matter of minutes. The forts at Fredericksburg have capitulated, you are outnumbered, your situation is hopeless—"

"Colonel Browne has instructed me to reply to such a proposal," the officer said, smiling with some disdain, "it is his duty as it is his inclination to defend this post to the last extremity."

"All the artillery at the fort is in our hands—"

The young man lifted his chin as if thinking of traditions and great captains, of founding a legend of the overwhelmed Loyalist officer defying the leader of a rebel band in upper Georgia. "You will find us ready to defend ourselves from the worst you can send against us," he said steadily, with some of the tone of amateur theatricals but also with a hint of the fresh picture in his mind of men bleeding real blood.

"You will be given safe conduct to Savannah—"

It was of no use. A minute later he was marching through the broomsedge again down the sloping field, his gaze on the rising ground beyond the river where the road from Ninety-Six slanted in toward the ferry: they were waiting for Cruger, hoping to the last.

Clarke received the news with his decisive little twitch at the corner of his lips. "Very well, sir! We'll take the lobster-bastards by force." He shot a squirt of tobacco into the pine needles.

"Major, I want you to," pausing an instant to glance at a man on horseback threading his way toward them through the trees, then continuing, "I want you to go back along the road until you meet Colonel McCall's party. Tell him I need him here right now,—and why in hell's he been so long acoming. Don't say it that way, but you're a schoolmaster, you know how—"

The young ensign flung himself out of a fine British saddle and, leaving the panting horse behind him, said to Colonel Clarke through his heavy breathing, without any preliminaries. "They're deserting back there, sir,—in droves."

The old man drew back his head as if he had been slapped.

"Colonel McCall said you were to be informed immediately—"

"Deserting!"

The young officer went on, talking with a restrained tension about how the men had got into the Indian presents during the night, "got into a hogs'd of rum." They had taken blankets and shirts

and boots, whatever they wanted, then, this morning, they began to shoulder their guns and just walk away. "They say they'll be back next week; say colonel told them they could go—"

He scrambled stiff-legged into the saddle and was gone.



THEY TURNED OUT of Martin Street into Jackson and after a few blocks into Greene. She didn't know at just what point it became clear to her what he was planning to do, but she thought it should have been evident almost at once from the tone of his voice if from nothing else, relating factually what he and Winn had said, slightly exasperated, perhaps, but no more angry than she would be at finding she had dropped a stitch three or four rows back. Several times she had been about to interrupt him to tell him he just couldn't do this, knowing that the closer they got to the Courthouse the harder it was probably going to be to dissuade him; but she didn't want to interrupt him until she could think of some argument that would have real weight with him and try as she would she couldn't think of much besides his own advantage which, unless she could bring him to a more logical and practical point of view, wouldn't have much influence with him now.

Her own conviction was that going before the jury would be disastrous; there was a possibility it might not be, but the chances were that it would. They had before them, both of them, the example of what had happened to Mr. Dobit on much less provocation than this. It was impossible George hadn't considered that; he apparently just didn't care. But what of her? This would affect her too. Had he thought of that? Or didn't he care about that either?

"I try to understand," she said coldly. "I just simply don't." She gazed off down the gray lane of the street with the misty rain floating down like tepid snow. "Why should all this make any difference to you? That's what I don't understand."

"That doesn't seem hard to understand."

"All that matters to me is your happiness and mine. What difference does it make what becomes of these people?"

"Well,—it makes a difference what becomes of them."

"I mean this won't destroy them. They'll survive. They won't know it's happened. But you'll know it and I'll know it; it may change the whole future of your life—"

"Oh, I don't think so," he smiled. "And anyhow I can't wash my hands of this thing now. It may not matter to people in the long run what I do; it probably won't. But it'll matter to me; my hands are sore with being washed of things.—I don't see why you make such a point of it. I'll be back in fifteen minutes—"

"Because this won't be the end of it.—You got into all this step by step and now you have to take the whole thing on your shoulders—"

"Oh, there're lots and lots of shoulders," he said impatiently.

"Why doesn't this boy do it, what's his name? It's his business. They didn't arrest you. But no. He knows what's what. He's through with it—"

"The boy's going in the Army," he said with finality, as if that ended it. Then he added, "He'll be doing his share all right.—And mine too."

She turned her face toward him not without sympathy. "That's really what worries you, isn't it?"

He brought the car to a stop in front of the Courthouse and she watched his lean hand reach out and turn the ignition key. "I can't for the life of me get it out of my head this is the same sort of thing we're fighting a war about,—if you believe what you're told, and I do, about two thirds of it. If these fellows are willing to go all over the world and fight about it I don't see how I can refuse to do something about it back here. That may sound a little grand but I don't mean it that way. It's really quite simple,—and personal. I've got a brother out there in New Guinea somewhere; there're a lot of other people's brothers out there. They're risking everything they've got—"

"There's risk in this too."

"Not like theirs—"

"If you go in there you'll be doing the same thing that boy got arrested for; you'll be coming out in public and criticizing them—"

"You think I'll be arrested?" he laughed.

"I don't know what they'll do but—"

"Testifying before a grand jury isn't 'coming out in public,'—but even if it was—"

"I suppose the School Board will never hear a word about it."

"I doubt it. But even if they did—"

"George, you're honest; you're on the level. But the world's not run that way. The world's run from down in the dark somewhere; it's as different from the way they make it look to us as real life is from the movies. Oh, they wouldn't be so crude and frank as to say they were firing you for talking to—"

"They can't fire me—"

"Just suppose they could. What would you do?"

"I'll cross that bridge—"

"You'd be explaining the rest of your life why you'd lost this job. Some people would believe you, some wouldn't,—a lot of them wouldn't. You just can't put yourself under such a handicap for something no concern of yours anyhow."

"You see it in a different light from me." There was a tone of flat detachment in his voice she had never heard before; something inside her seemed to spin completely over. She saw them as closer to a real quarrel than they had ever been and she instinctively drew back from it at the same time that her pride whispered of independence.

"I see it as something that ought to be done," he went on in the same voice. "There's nobody else to do it, so I'll do it. There are plenty of young men this afternoon risking a lot more than—"

"They've got no choice.—And anyhow, it's a lot easier to take risks when everybody round you's taking risks too. You're by yourself, George—"

"You may think I look like a fool in this—"

"Oh, darling, of course I don't!" She laid her hand over his but

it was unresponsive and he went on in a tone of walking alone that made her wonder if persuading him not to do this wasn't impossible.

"I may think so myself one day. But now I don't care. I think this ought to be done. I think it's the backbone of everything we stand for in this country. It's taken us a hundred and fifty years of all kinds of struggle but we've developed the most advanced type of government in the world today. It won't work everywhere in the world because the people are not up to it yet; and it won't necessarily go on working here. You've got to keep your eye on it. You've got to watch out for just exactly this sort of monkeyshines—"

"Other people could do it better than you."

"All right. But if other people won't, I will."

"But let's *see* if other people won't. You haven't tried yet." She hadn't much hope she might delay him but it was worth the attempt; he might feel different about it tomorrow.

"There isn't time. It's got to be done now."

"I just can't bear to see you trying to stop something as powerful as this. Mere honesty's nothing.—Why all this sense of sacrifice?" She was sorry this had slipped out but it was too late to recall it and she went on, hoping almost blindly she might shame him out of it; "Cutting off *your* hand doesn't relieve anybody else's suffering.—It's just immature to think so."

He didn't say anything, sitting there looking out at the shaft of the Signers' Monument; she went on, not knowing whether she had made any impression on him or not, "You mean a great deal to me. When I'm with you I'm happy again. But I'm as practical as salt and pepper. If you get hurt in this then I get hurt too. And I don't want to be hurt. I've been hurt enough.—I wouldn't say that, except that I would do almost anything to keep you from going in there—"

"I'm going," he said with a calm shake of his head. "It would worry me the rest of my life if I didn't. I love you. I'll go on loving you. I'd thought I would do anything in the world for you; but I can't do this. I may not accomplish anything but I'm going to try,—come hell and high water." He pulled the handle on the door and

got out on the wet black street; he stood there for a second, not as if undecided whether to go but wondering just how he should go.

She stared straight ahead of her through the fogged windshield, her eyes burning but too angry for tears, angry with defeat, her pride wounded. She felt like turning on him and telling him she thought he was a fool, telling him anything that might hurt him too; of course the word that would hurt him most was "old"—

"I think you're inhuman—and cold—and—"

"You don't think any such thing." He stretched out his hand across the door toward her. "Give me your hand."

"If you go in there I'm going home"; she said it almost before she thought it.

He drew his hand back, half angry. The bell in the clock tower began to strike four. Then his manner changed and he said quietly, "This isn't the sort of thing a girl walks home about," looking at her as though to see if he could make her smile.

When she didn't move a muscle he said, "I'll be back in fifteen minutes," and walked away.

She put her hand on the door lever and gripped it until her knuckles were white. The few cars that went by now passed with a wet hiss on the macadam.

She had done all she could. His taking it as a sort of jejune petulance on her part at being neglected only made it all the more exasperating. He had no conception of the way things were with her, no glimmer of the fact that what he did concerned not himself alone but her too. It was inconceivable that something like this could mean so much to him, even in his remote and isolated "garret" of scholasticism, that he could disregard the future if he saw it as their future instead of his. He didn't love her; he didn't know the meaning of love, the endless sequence of dreams and thoughts, the world walled in, the transformation of merely being, into life,—the trees in place of the forest. It was only the forest to him; whatever the cause, age, conscience, whatever it was, she meant little to him in the face of these other things, these "big" things that were nothing more than the sum of the small—

It had all been a failure. Not that she had tried to make him love her but that love between them had seemed possible,—unlike enough for passion, like enough for tranquility. If he was willing to cast all that aside—why,—so was she!

And yet wasn't she acting like a schoolgirl? Running home to mama.—Oh, she was sick of it! She wasn't going to sit there waiting until he made a big enough fool of himself to be satisfied; she had tried to help him: he didn't want it. And he didn't believe she would go, did he? Walking away like that, "I'll be back in fifteen minutes!"

She put the knitting bag under her arm and got out. What "home" did she mean anyhow? Back to Mother Estes? Waiting there as if begging him to apologize?

She ran across the street to a secondhand bookstore, asked an ancient man for his telephone, pulled a dusty string on the light over the instrument and called the railroad station. "What is the next train for Dayton, Ohio, please?"

She could hear the brisk swish of thin pages, then, "There's a train out of here at 2:10 A.M.; change in Atlanta and pick up the Southern out of there at 8:40 in the morning—"

►►►►►

AS HE APPROACHED the junction of his path with the Fredericksville-Ninety-Six Road Lieutenant Colonel Cruger called his quartermaster officer and laid a pink-and-white fingernail on the map at a spot between the Widow West's and Coffey's Mill marked "Fine Land full of Cane runs fit for Cow pens." "We'll bivouac here," he said, "and move on to Ninety-Six tomorrow—"

Ninety-Six and "home,"—"home" a raw stockade of notched logs in the middle of nowhere, as far away from New York and the civilization of his father's house as it seemed possible to get! At any rate, though, he would put on a fresh uniform tomorrow afternoon and ride over to Mrs. Blinn's and spend the night and Sunday with

his wife; whose disgust with the interminable Southern heat would undoubtedly have grown during his absence. "A game of chess, Nancy?" As likely as not she had thrown the pieces in Mrs. Blinn's well—

At the junction he turned in his saddle and gazed back at the long column following after him on the bright squeals of the fifes and the deep authoritative pounding of the drums, his own New York Volunteers in the lead, their gaiters white with Carolina dust but swinging as a man, the Royal New Jersey Fencibles far in the rear, marching waist-deep in the dust-fog, their bayonet points rocking dimly over the cloud. And between them the plodding, stumbling harvest of his ten-day recruiting circuit of the district! As unlikely a mob of scrawny yokels as had ever stepped forth to serve their King,—stepped forth on the urgings of drums and parades and red coats and pleadings and threats, and pushed from behind by knowing what his lordship had done to Gates the other day a few miles north of Camden, pushed by the popular abhorence of anything that looked like a lost cause—

He saw an officer whom he didn't know riding across the field in the angle, trotting through the broomsedge, pulling about the stumps. When he recognized the insignia of an aide from Cornwallis's headquarters Colonel Cruger drew his horse to one side of the track and waited.

The letter was addressed to him at Ninety-Six Courthouse but the lieutenant had learned at Fort Saint John the regiment had passed that way two days before and he had followed after it, not that the matter was immediately pressing but the colonel was to be reached without unnecessary delay—

He read it under the shade of a persimmon tree, the late sun burning against his left cheek, the rivulets of sweat running down in front of his ears: "I am informed that a Colonel Clarke has assembled a corps of backwoodsmen on the frontier of Georgia and South Carolina with the intention of marching to attack the British post at Fredericksville . . . every confidence that the British Commander . . . but be so good as to hold yourself prepared. . . ."

He wondered for a moment whether he would perhaps camp for a few days at tonight's bivouac until he had definite news of the outcome; Coffey's Mill was about halfway to Fredericksville. If Browne should need him,—he could imagine the man blushing red at the insult. He thought he could safely continue on to Ninety-Six; his lordship believed him to be at Ninety-Six and had not ordered a move; the recruits ought to be delivered there—

When he dismounted in the deep shade of the mill he stood beside the wheel listening with a half-conscious pleasure to the cool drumming of the water pouring over the spillway, his blue eyes on the groom leading his horse to the stream. "Don't let him drink much until he cools off." He turned into the mill and climbed the rough stairs to the open third story, pulling the stiff hat from his wet forehead and skinning out of the coat that was never meant for duty in the tropics. "Gentlemen," he would tell them in the Broadway coffee houses when all this was over, maybe this winter, certainly before spring, the King's honors on his coat, his new coat, "Gentlemen, the heat in September in Carolina is—" He would probably have to say "indescribable," being more soldier than poet. "Ferguson seriously advised his lordship to take up summer quarters until the rains came."

"Please, sir."

He tossed the coat and hat to the black servant-boy and strolled to the rail above the great wheel, gazing down into the water below the dam coiling with an amber color over the shallow sand, his hands on his hips and an almost impalpable air fanning the loose folds of his linen shirt and cooling his arms. Some days it looked as if the summer would never end,—like the war.

And yet the end of both was clearly at hand. Though the afternoon had been as suffocating as August, the setting sun was weaker nowadays; he could almost feel a sheet of coolness rising from the pond, rising and flattening out the blue veil of wood smoke that descended into the hollow from the supper fires on the hill. And there was the same suggestion of end in the feeling of the war, the same sense of having reached its autumn; a few more incidents, a

few more skirmishes, as there would be a few more hot days, but—

He sat down on the edge of the cot and held out his right boot. "How long does your summer last in Carolina, boy?" He often asked him that; he liked to hear the sorghum-smooth voice. In New York they had always had black servants, his father, his grandfather, probably even the first John Cruger, out from Bristol in 1663, but these blacks had finer voices—

"Not much longer, Colonel."

"You told me that in August," watching the boy's hands, black as the leather.

The boy smiled: "Most over now."

He gazed off beyond the kinky skull at the blue smoke creeping out over the shady end of the millpond as if someone were pouring it leisurely on a great pane of glass. Most over now. And yet it went on,—he hardly knew whether he meant the heat or the war.

Of course it would have been over long ago but for the damned Monsieurs; coming up off Tybee with twenty-five sails of the line and above a dozen frigates and four thousand land forces to do their poor best at destroying the Empire, leaving the whole rebel army lying idle, so much despised by their great and good allies as to be forbidden inside Monsieur's camp—

"Please, sir."

He slipped his feet into some beaded Cherokee moccasins Ferguson had given him, sloughed across the planks and sat down on a camp stool beside the boy's soap and razor. Their stupid persistence was exasperating. You scattered their allies, you routed their armies, you seized their ports and their towns, Philadelphia, New York, Savannah,—but it went on. It was like playing chess with Nancy: the inevitable checkmate four moves ahead and if you suggested the game was over she flew into a fury. They sacrificed a city as blithely as Nancy tossed away a Bishop. They didn't seem to understand. He had read in some rebel gazette that the loss, if you please, of Philadelphia was "slightly regarded by the States and Congress. Confidence in the fidelity of our fellow citizens, in the courage of the armies . . ." It was something new in warfare; wars were be-

tween sovereigns and when you occupied a capital, why,—that was the end of the game. Here, with no sovereign except their High Mightiness the Mob—

He raised his chin over the edge of the towel and closed his eyes. He had talked to many of the rebel gentry last year at Savannah, telling them the game was over. He would have liked to talk to them again; it was even more obvious now. It's checkmate, gentlemen. You must understand that as well as I. Washington was your only hope, and what has become of Washington? General Clinton has drawn Washington off to West Point and immobilized him,—in a piece of strategy as sound as Britain. Your rebel hacks scribble of Clinton wasting his time in New York, as if anything could be more important to winning the war than keeping Washington safely out of it. And now, with your only hope nailed fast on the Hudson —do you realize, gentlemen, we have nailed him there for three years!—now Lord Cornwallis strikes up through the disaffected South. It is all over. Charleston is ours, Sunbury is ours, we took Savannah in a forenoon, bag and baggage, and when you and your great and good allies laid a siege on it last year,—well, surely, you haven't forgotten that. Your friend, Monsieur, hasn't forgotten, anyway; I believe you'll find him licking his wounds somewhere safely over in the West Indian Islands.—You lost an army at Charleston and when you raised another, his lordship destroyed it in half a day; the only feat your General Gates performed was to flee two hundred miles in three and a half days. Even if your Monsieurs were bringing a new army to save you, where would it come ashore? On an open beach?—Your militia is without money, without provision and forage except what is impressed, without clothing. Your Congress is powerless to raise taxes. For four years you have struggled, living upon false hopes and temporary devices. His lordship had restored Georgia and South Carolina to the Crown; there is nothing between him and Virginia and when you have lost Virginia you have lost your last base of supply. What would you say if I told you General Leslie, at this very moment, is preparing to

land three thousand troops on the James?—Man to man, gentlemen,—

“Call me the sergeant there, boy.” He watched the young blackamoor run barefooted across the mill floor to the railing, whistle, and lift an imperious first finger to the guard below. When the man had sprung to the top of the steps and gone rigid in every detail except his black moustache which moved a little with his heavy breathing, Colonel Cruger told him he wanted to talk to the miller.

He talked to them as part of his duty, as you send a leadsman into the chains with a sounding line to see what sort of water you are riding into. Though he also enjoyed it; a kind of relaxation when the day was over. Most of them hereabouts were as docile as anything you would find in Europe,—though it was just as well to remember the civilian population always threw flowers to the conquering army. And scampered away if the tide turned—

He closed his eyes again and tilted his head back against the post, thinking of the cool suds on his cheeks.—He had considered, as any soldier should, the possibility of defeat. Sometimes on humid depressing afternoons, when the drops of sweat ran down the sides of his body out of his armpits and the war seemed just a hopeless succession of Irish brawls that would never be decisive, the question would recur to him of what if they in Britain had guessed wrong on the temper and resources of these rebels; after all, weren’t they of the same stock and instincts that had made Britain great?

He had an answer,—always the same because the facts remained the same. The rebels were deficient in leaders. Washington was the only one. “Dr. Franklin’s electrical rod,” as one of their gazettes had it, “smote the earth and out sprang General Washington.” But Dr. Franklin should have smote the earth more often. The rest were what you would expect to find in any rebellion, zealous amateurs; and amateurs were a poor thing to win a war with, a lot less build a nation with. Even if, with the help of the French and the Poles and the Germans and all the rest of Britain’s perennial ill-wishers, they established a new nation, it was doomed because their “equality” was incompatible with leadership. If you destroyed the

aristocracy, what would you put in place of the intelligence, patriotism, foresight you had cashiered? A nation founded on the principle of eliminating its ruling class,—well, on the very face of it! It was as if his raw recruits should troop out to challenge a regiment of the line—

“Please, sir.”

He turned his head for the boy to finish shaving his neck.

When the boy had washed the bits of lather off his cheeks and taken the towel from beneath his chin, he stood up in the beaded moccasins and strolled over to the railing, looking out at the colored clouds in the pond under the sheet of thin smoke that came to him with a smell of the cooking meat on the coals and the corncake in the ashes.

He was about to tell the boy to go see what was keeping the miller when he heard a hurried sound of steps on the stairs. He gazed out over the peaceful millpond; “Your name is Coffey?” he said over his shoulder.

“Colonel Cruger, a gentleman below asks to see the colonel.”

He turned about and looked at the young corporal. “Where’s the miller?”

“If you please, sir, the gentleman said to say he was Sir Patrick Houston—”

Sir Patrick Houston was with Browne at Fort Frederick! But even as his mind formed the thought, it leaped on ahead to form the only possible explanation: Browne was asking for help—to subdue a corps of backwoodsmen. And there would be no Ninety-Six-and-home tomorrow, no Nancy—

He waved the corporal out of his way and started down the stairs to greet his visitor—



GEORGE HURRIED THROUGH the beautiful shell of the old Courthouse into a damp, dark interior of creaking boards and knee-high spittoons and penciled signs of “White” and “Colored” tacked here

and there in the sinister yellow light of bare electric bulbs dropped dizzily on greasy cords, all of it saturated with an almost visible scent of sweat and urine and chewing tobacco and pink disinfectant, —the well of government, the headwaters of democracy. He remembered coming down there once, soon after he returned to Fredricksville, to pay his poll tax so that he could vote; leaning on the wornout sill of some window and watching an old man who hadn't shaved since Sunday flipping the stiff pages of a giant ledger. "Your poll tax all paid, Mr. Cliatt." "Why, I've been out of the state for five years!" "Some good friend of yours must been paying it for you—"

"Mr. Grinnell?" he said to a slight man of sixty-five who opened the door of the grand-jury room a few seconds after he had knocked.

"Come in, sir; glad to see you." He nodded to George with a cordial smile and held out his hand. "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Jack Winn—"

"No, sir," he said, partly to Mr. Grinnell, partly to the twenty or twenty-five men sitting about under the smoke of cigarettes and one or two good cigars. "I don't believe Winn's going to get here. I'm George Cliatt." They looked at him in some surprise and he went on to explain he had talked to Winn, found him reluctant to appear and decided to come himself; he told them he knew a good deal about the case, having been at the football game and at the filling station when Winn was arrested—

"Mr. Cliatt, you've got as much right to come before the grand jury as anybody else," Mr. Grinnell reassured him pleasantly, dragging a chair across the splintered floor and inviting him to sit down with an insistent fatelier push on his left shoulder.

"I haven't any interest in the case," George said to them, "except as a citizen.—But," he added with a smile, "I feel that's a big 'except.'"

"The clerk's just reading back our presentments," said Mr. Grinnell, patting him three times on the back. "If you don't mind waiting a minute.—Go on, Mr. Clerk."

"That's just about all, Mr. Grinnell," said the clerk. He read,

glancing at the paper out of the corner of his eye as if he knew the rest by heart, "We appreciate the willing and prompt cooperation of all persons invited to appear before us. We request that copies of these presentments be submitted to the local members of the Georgia Assembly and to the State Revenue Commissioner in Atlanta. Also that they be published at the County's expense in the newspaper that is now the official gazette. Signed,—and your signatures."

"All right. Now just hold that up until we talk to Mr. Cliatt here. We may want to add something." He crossed to his empty chair and seated himself informally. "Just what is it, Mr. Cliatt, you want to bring before these gentlemen?"

"Mr. Foreman," said a slow voice from beside one of the vast Southern windows; "may I interrupt for just a moment?" He rose, straightening out his thin length, and leaned with a soft leisureliness on the back of the chair in front of him as if he might be addressing a board of directors, his elbows stiff, which lifted the shoulders of his dark worsted coat. George had forgotten his name but he thought he was the bank official who had headed one of the War Loan drives. "I've read a little about this Jack Winn incident in the newspapers. It seems to me entirely a municipal matter. I don't see how this jury has authority to go into it. We are called together by the county; we make our presentments to the judge of the Superior Court of the district. The affairs of the city are just," he smiled, "not in our bailiwick. If a man is falsely arrested, why, he has his recourse in the courts. It's not a matter to come before this jury—"

"We don't know, sir, do we," said Mr. Grinnell affably, "what Mr. Cliatt wants us to hear until we listen to him? I think he has a right to be heard." He ran his eyes inquiringly over the faces.

"Let him talk," somebody said.

Mr. Grinnell nodded at him and George got to his feet, feeling a half-conscious shock at the absence of young faces in his class. "The arrest of this young man, gentlemen, which I shall be glad to tell you about if you wish, though the accounts in the newspapers were

quite accurate,—the arrest is only part of it. That's only the latest, and quite probably not the last, of a long train of abuses of power. Such abuses are dangerous. Not only to us here in Fredericksville but to the country; America, in the last analysis, is pretty much the sum of its Fredericksvilles." He paused a second, more or less to caution himself against phrases they might too readily discount as talk of the fanciful impractical professor. "It's these abuses I think the jury ought to look into, as well as the arrest."

"What sort of abuses, Professor?"

He quailed at the epithet as never before; perhaps he had already vitiated his testimony. "Well, sir, I have reason to believe that prisoners in the City Stockade have been given their freedom for working on the private projects of some of the public officials. City trucks have been used to transport material—city material—"

"Have you one project in mind, in particular, Mr. Cliatt?" Mr. Grinnell prompted him.

"The one I'm thinking of is a fishing camp up on Kettle Creek being built by Mr. Buden."

"And you think prisoners from the Stockade were used to build it?"

"To clear the land and grade the roads, yes, sir. I believe city employees were used for the actual construction; and much of the material came from a city-owned building in town that was dismantled and given to Buden. It was hauled up there in city trucks." There was a slight stir of collars and cuffs that encouraged him, then the voice that had addressed him as "Professor" said, "Do you have this information first hand, Mr. Cliatt?"

"No, sir. But I know a man who was told that by the driver of one of the trucks—"

"Then, isn't the truck driver the man we want to see?"

"You can understand," George said with a minute dismay, "how the driver, a city employee, might not want to testify before you—"

"Mr. Foreman," said a white-haired man in a blue serge suit that was a little too long for him in the sleeves, speaking in a quiet voice as matter-of-fact as hominy and gravy. "There's no use sitting here

and acting like all this is news to us. Every man in this room's heard rumors of exactly what Mr. Cliatt's talking about. I don't like it any more than Mr. Cliatt does,—if it's true. Let's find out if it's true. Get Buden down here; Buden'll tell you the truth. If he says there's nothing in it, I'm satisfied. Get the mayor down here. Ask him whether or not taxpayers' property was given to a public official.—I make a motion—”

“Just a minute, sir,” said the tall man in the dark worsted coat. “Mr. Foreman, I strongly question the propriety of haling these gentlemen before us on this sort of charge—”

“He ‘haled’ that Winn boy for a lot less than that,” a wiry little man grumbled from the corner of the room.

“If you please!” said the tall juror. “The charge is most informal. It is not made under oath. It is based on nothing more than what this gentleman has heard at second or third hand. No doubt he believes it but he has given us no valid evidence of any wrongdoing. We can't put these gentlemen to the trouble and embarrassment of coming here unless we know something's wrong. If the truck driver was an eyewitness, why, let's hear the truck driver; decide about calling the officials on the basis of what he tells us.—I move we subpoena the driver of this truck.”

The motion received a slightly irritated second from somewhere and Mr. Grinnell said, lifting his voice above a thin layer of non-committal grunts and murmurs, “You're seconding the motion to call the truck driver?”

“I certainly am, yes, sir.”

George felt his breath suddenly catch in a sensation not very different from feeling his tires begin to spin on one of Georgia's wet clay hills,—a hill that he realized all at once might be more slippery than it looked; it was almost, in fact, as if a wheel had skidded gently over the edge of the ditch. Calling the truck driver was simply out of the question; not only did he not know who he was but he didn't believe Mac would tell. He wouldn't even want Mac to tell. And even if Mac told, he wouldn't want to have the man brought before the jury, with more than a mere likelihood of losing

his job; the last thing he had intended was involving anyone else in this. If they insisted on calling the driver first then he thought everything must collapse. He had no idea how the majority of the jury felt but, studying their faces they seemed to him dreamily passive, unmoved, most of them, incurious, apparently ready to vote in favor of practically any motion set before them—

“Mr. Foreman,” said the white-haired man with the long sleeves, “my interpretation of the powers of this jury is it can look into whatever angles of the government it chooses to. It doesn’t have to have charges presented to it, either by this gentleman here or the truck driver or anybody else. If we want to look into something, why, we—look into it. No reason in the world to embarrass the driver of this truck.”

“Any further discussion?” said Mr. Grinnell impassively. “If not, you’ve heard the motion and the second to call the truck driver and base our action on what he tells us.” He asked for a vote.

George heard a chorus of “Ayes” and scrutinized his knuckles trying to hold his facial muscles in an impassive mask. On the impelling volume of “Noes”, a tingling wave of satisfaction rose at the back of his ears. He lifted his eyes to the old brown sill of the window and the blond point of the monument; he told himself he had known it would be that way.

Mr. Grinnell had hardly pronounced his weary-sounding, “Motion defeated,” before the white-haired man started rising again with a quiet sort of implacable patience. “I repeat my motion, Mr. Foreman, that Mr. Buden and the mayor be invited to meet with us and discuss these rumors and newspaper write-ups.”

The motion was seconded from somewhere as the man in the worsted suit rose once more. “May I suggest, sir, without inflicting myself too heavily on the jury’s patience, that it would be more courteous merely to inform Mr. Buden and the mayor that these rumors have been brought to the jury’s attention by Professor Cliatt here and that if either or both of them cared to make a statement the jury would of course be pleased to meet with them—”

The wiry little man in the corner pulled himself a few inches off

the seat of his chair: "I'm in favor of giving the sheriff a couple su'poenas and telling him to go get both of 'em right now."

A kind of rustling smile fluttered over the room and the white-haired man said he thought the word "invite" struck a middle course and should be retained. Somebody called for the question and a minute later, with three or four dissenting votes, George heard the motion passed.

When he hurried down the old iron steps of the Courthouse he could feel the victory glowing in every vein of his body; a grin kept breaking into his face, as hard to stifle as a yawn; he gazed out ahead of him at the cream-colored monument through the rain-mist with a pleasure he usually associated with sunshine. Now they were getting somewhere. Here at last was action. Out of this would come recommendations; the jury would offer the people a plan. There would be something concrete and specific public opinion could fasten to; his match had set the lightwood splinters burning under the great oak logs—

Then at the bottom of the steps he saw his old car sitting there beyond the iron fence empty and his joy plunged away in a long dive like the trailing end of one of the air-raid sirens that wailed every day at noon.

More than half angry and annoyed but desolate too, he clutched the car door with both hands, gazing down at the worn out floor-rubber. His desolation cried for the sight and sound of her as if to extinguish a fire, counteract a poison; call her, go to the house, find her: "Look here! You can't do this—"

Which would accomplish nothing. Let her think it over. Call her tomorrow; she would feel different tomorrow. He hadn't anything to apologize for. "You're stubborn, aren't you?" with her mouth severe and the smile only in her eyes,—that might not ever look at him like that again.—Oh, that was nonsense. He would make it all right, in some way, any way. She wouldn't think he had been such a fool when she read what the jury was doing—

## FIVE

*Continued cloudy; occasional showers and light rain tonight and Friday . . .*

THE REVEREND SAMPEY McCALL drove down the Upper Road from the country a little before ten. He didn't know what to make of all this business about the stump and the thing under it. He didn't like it much more than the old nigger. But if the Lord wanted it out for some reason He would make known in His own good time, why, he would get it out. If there really was anything under it, that might be the Lord's way of calling His people together, with their free-will offerings for the hat that would get so heavy you had to hold it under the crown, and their souls to be saved—

As if with an affirmative nod, the scattered indefinable morning clouds grew pale in front of the sun and let through a brief silver light.

When he lurched and bumped over the rough dirt road across the field the air felt damper still and there was a heavy dew on the coarse stalks of the broomsedge. There was even a heavy dew on the faded blue shoulders of his Deacon-Major Ira Wellmaker's overalls, waiting in the grass to greet him, as if he had been on watch half the night; yesterday's rain had scattered sticky bright leaves over the ground and when he cut off the motor he could hear, through the compact air, the steady grinding of one of Mr. Doc Buden's road scrapers spreading clay in front of the mills away over on the other side of the canal.

He walked over to the dozen or so people already standing on the edge of the moat that circled the stump and studying the tree in silence as if enumerating to themselves every flake of dirt and bead of rosin. He said nothing to them but laid his broad black hat on a trampled claybank and got down on both knees. He waited without a word until everyone was kneeling then lifted his closed eyes and said a morning prayer.

After he had read from the Bible the verses about the tree of life he closed the book, lifted his chin and announced, "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound—That saved a wretch like me!" going on into the tune with his deep bass like a strong man lending his shoulder to help with a stalled car. As the group took it up he rose and walked singing round the hole trying to appraise the amount of work yet to be done. At the last line he got down in the ditch and pushed against the stump; the rosin came off sticky on his palms but the stump was clearly loose.

He raised his hand to two scrawny but willing helpers and after setting them to digging strode backward a few paces into the broom-sedge. Once it was free, the problem then was heaving it out. He thought the best plan was to shovel off an edge of the hole, then back his car into the field, fasten a good rope under the stump and round his rear axle and haul away. The only trouble with that was the ground was slightly muddy; his tires were down to the web and there was a real chance they wouldn't grip—

"Ira," he said to the deacon-major, "let somebody step over yonder to that filling station and see if they can let us have a stout rope; I figure that stump's about ready to come loose.—Where's Doodye this morning?"

The deacon-major said Doodye had gone home to get some coffee just a minute before the Reverend got there. "He ought to be back any time now—"

"He didn't go off to school, did he?"

"Oh, no, sir. He wasn't going to school today."

"We need Doodye with us today, Ira. I've never seen anything

like the way Doodye is right with the Lord.—See about the rope, Ira."

He stood on the edge of the group watching the red-brick mill houses across the field for the first sign of Doodye; he wanted to wait to start the car until Doodye got there; put the boy in the front seat with him,—sort of like hooking a double-header on a heavy train.

But he couldn't wait forever and after about ten minutes he turned toward the car, glancing into the group at the shovel-sounds and the stump. Doodye was sitting on the top of the stump hugging his knees. "How'd you get here!" Mr. McCall asked him, somewhat irritated; it was like having an animal shoot past you out of a dark corner.

Doodye gazed at his knees with a steady smile, not saying anything and Mr. McCall beckoned to him. "Get in the front seat with me, Doodye," he said, opening the panel with a squeak and watching the boy scramble in.

He put the car in first speed and pulled off down the road a little past the stump; then he leaned out of the window and steered the rear end back into the space the crowd had opened for him. Some of the men guided him back with rolling wrists as if they were in the freight yards: "Little more, little more, that's good! Whoa!" The empty rack that had once carried a spare tire seemed to be about six feet from the hole.

When he had switched off the motor and got out he noticed Doodye standing silent in the broomsedge on the other side of the car, his eyes fixed at an angle as if listening. Mr. McCall motioned for quiet among them; the low talk subsided, the men with the shovels straightened up. "What's the matter, Doodye?" he said softly.

"I hear something."

The crowd became still. Somebody stifled a cough.

"I can't hear anything, Doodye," Mr. McCall told him.

"Over that way." Doodye lifted his hand toward the canal and the mills.

Then Mr. McCall realized with a noticeable pang of disappointment that what Doodye heard was the road scraper grinding through the gravel; it was a relief in a way but deflating too. Somebody said, "He don't hear nothing but old Ludell on the scraper."

"That's what it is, Doodye," Mr. McCall said to him.

Doodye turned the purple saucers of his eyes in a slow arc about the sky until they met Mr. McCall's black hat. "I thought I heard a rush of wings," he said. Then he smiled a little, ducked his head and darted in about the legs of the crowd.

"Rush of wings!" somebody said uncomfortably.

Mr. McCall interrupted a growing mumble. "All right. Where's my rope. Let's get the stump out of there; it's going to c'mence to rain directly.—That ain't much of a rope."

Ira asked him in an undertone if he wanted Doodye to pray over it but Mr. McCall went on as if he hadn't heard. "Put that end you got in your hand there, Groves, round my rear axle. That's right. Hook it round both sides the differential so it won't slip. That's a dickens of a rope to send somebody asks for a rope."

He had them break away the rim of the hole toward the car and loop the rope round the base of the stump. Then he checked both ends of it and picked it up in the middle and pulled on it. When he looked round for Doodye he was surprised to see how the crowd had grown; there must have been thirty or forty people now, not only most of his own flock but heathen people he had never seen before. He told one of the deacon-captains to get them back from the rope: "That old thing's like to break.—Doodye, I want you in here with me."

He guided the boy into the front seat past the wheel and got in beside him. When he had the motor going he leaned out of the window and moved ahead slowly until he had taken up the slack on the rope. "All right now," he said; "everybody humble his heart in prayer."

He put both hands on the wheel, speeded up the motor and let in the clutch. The motor dived into a great stillness.

He pressed the starter again and got the engine turning. "Hold

on to yourself now, son," he told the boy, leaned out and made sure of everything on both sides, then whipped the motor up into a roar. As he let in the clutch pedal the tone of the motor sank to a low tugging. He eased the clutch out a little, raced the engine in a thunder that shook every tooth in his head and took his foot off the clutch. The engine still raced but he could see out of the corner of his eye the car wasn't moving. He saw two or three men waving and hollering something at him; he lifted his foot off the accelerator.

"Your wheels spinning, Reverend."

He climbed out and looked. They had dug into the wet ground two or three inches; there was a spray of pink mud over the side of the stump and none of the lettering on the back of the car was visible except a faint "Need" in the middle. He could smell a slight odor that was partly hot rubber but, worse than that, partly singed webbing. If the stump had moved an inch he couldn't see it.

He told Ira to get three or four men on each side of the car. "Put three or four of 'em back of the stump, let 'em all push."

He slid under the steering wheel again, lashed the old engine into a storm, gave the signal to push by wagging his head because he wanted to hold on to the wheel with both hands. He could feel the rear end of the car lift up, slip dizzily from side to side. "Keep her going!" Ira shouted through the window. He could smell burnt cloth now like a fire in a cotton warehouse but he kept the accelerator on the floor—

Then there was an explosion that lifted him out of his seat. It sounded as if the whole back seat had blown loose.

"Cut it off! Cut it off!" Ira bellowed at him.

He switched off the ignition and straightened his hat.

"The tire went, Reverend," Ira said with a wide grin, responding to the racking gust of laughter which the loud noise had blasted out of the crowd. Mr. McCall heard him but paid no attention; he sat there glaring straight ahead at the old crack in the windshield glass, his thoughts vibrating about between the disaster to the tire, the fact of the stump sitting there like the Rock of Ages and his determination to count slowly to ten or if necessary to twenty.

There was nothing to do but get out and go back and look at it. He opened the door and pushed his way through the crowd, which gave him the impression now of numbering at least a hundred. He stood with Doodye beside the rope, the churned mud slippery under his shoes, and gazed at what was left of the tire, ripped and miserable-looking in the wet trough. "I wonder if maybe the Lord don't want that stump out of there," he said to Ira.

"It could be," Ira said.

"Even if the tire hadn't blew, we weren't getting anywhere. Maybe He means for us to leave it like it is. I reckon there's no reason He can't change His mind like anybody else." He glanced out over the heads of the crowd in the direction of Broad Street; along the dirt road was a string of people, men, women and children, hurrying in toward them. It wasn't at all clear to him what more could be done about the stump but it was clear enough this was no time to falter. He thought of Doodye and he turned to the boy: "How does it look to you, Doodye? You think the Lord means leave the stump alone? I made sure He wanted that stump out of there to tell us something but maybe He's changed His mind."

The people round them who heard the question became silent, then those beyond became silent, all of them intently watching the boy's yellow-white hair.

Doodye picked up a rock, wound up like a big-league pitcher and threw it at the canalbank; then he lifted his hollow eyes to Mr. McCall's black string tie and said with a casual softness, "Old Ludell can snatch that stump out of there."

"What's that, Doodye?"

"Old Ludell on the big scraper—"

"Do, God!" said Mr. McCall and the deacon-major smacked his palms together with a crack like a drover's whip. "Bless the child!" he said. And two or three people began repeating, "Bless the child!"

. . . Standing below the canal bridge he watched the great machine come crawling over the arc against the pearl sky like something out of the Book of Revelations. "His eyes were as a flame

of fire,' " he couldn't help mumbling to himself, " 'and on his head were many crowns. . . . And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. . . . Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword . . . and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.' "—He waved the monster out of Broad Street and into the dirt road across the field.

When it came to the crowd they separated before it as if shoved back by the sound of its clanking joints and the rough thunder of its pounding life. It moved disdainfully over the ruts out of which they had pushed his shrunken little car and drew up, breathing with a mighty confidence, on the edge of the hole. The driver tossed out a chain from somewhere and motioned for them to wrap it about the stump. Then he got down in the broomsedge long enough to fasten the other end to a pinion that seemed waiting to receive it, swung himself up under the long spindle of the steering wheel, waved the crowd off and without more ado shifted a couple of levers and backed away. With a grinding of metal and a brief sequence of intestinal rips and crashes, the stump came out like a great tooth and tumbled over on the side of the hole ponderous and dead.

Mr. McCall moved in with all the rest to look into the crater, half prepared to find a pool of blood welling up from below. But it was nothing more than an ordinary stump hole; there was no skeleton, no pile of bones or anything out of the everyday. He leaned over the rim hardly able to believe there could really be nothing there except the loose pink earth—

" 'S matter with Doodye, Reverend?" the deacon-major mumbled to him.

He looked up at the boy on the other side of the hole staring past them toward the stump. The bruised goggles of his eyes were almost as deep and dark as his wide-open mouth. Then his chin began to move up and down and he pointed his milky hand beyond them.

Mr. McCall turned about. He felt his hand go out to steady himself on the deacon-major as the deacon-major reached out to him,

for there in a tangle of coiled and broken roots at the bottom of the stump, clutched as in the arms of an octopus, was the skeleton of a man, the straight long bones thrust this way and that like a field mouse in the claw of a carrion buzzard; the left side of the skull was split away like an apple struck from above with a carving knife.

Everything in front of Mr. McCall began to fade out, not into black but into a peaceful pearly gray. Dimly from all round him he was conscious of a rising wind of wails and cries and moving bodies, but he was most aware of the watery muscles of his legs and he sank down on his knees, partly because he needed to pray, partly because he simply couldn't stand.

He thrust both arms out above him, wrists waving. He wet his lips and opened his mouth but there seemed to be no words inside. Then he remembered the hymn and he pronounced the opening line in a voice that turned out to be louder than he intended: "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound—"

When the moment came to raise the tune there was only one voice besides his own,—a brittle, hollow-eyed piping that he knew could belong to nobody but Doodye. He lifted his heavy eyelids and looked round, half prepared to find the field empty. But the crowd was all there, some on their knees, some standing rigid with bowed heads; a few were flat on the ground, almost hidden under the broomsedge.

He called aloud, "I once was lost, but now am found—Was blind, but now I see."

And this time when he and the boy took it up, other voices began to come shakily along—

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THROUGH THE GULLY into the Upper Road, east down the red hill and out upon the white, rutted track across the bottom, striking Sandy Branch in a shower of glittering water that wet him through

his flannel drawers. When the trail that seemed interminable began at last to wind between the rail fences and the bare black cabins on the fringes of the settlement, Colonel Clarke tightened the reins enough to keep a sharp watch for a hard sand path through the trees that he remembered was a short cut which entered the Middle Road about a mile out from the fort; it was the Middle and Lower roads they would be following and he wanted to meet them face to face, not have to gallop after them and overtake them.—He found the path, swung into it—

When he saw the Middle Road crossing in front of him beyond an arch of the trees he brought the horse to a walk. In the silence he immediately heard the voices on the road. One man broke into a raucous shout of song: “Come out, ye Continentalers!—We’re going for to go—”

He rode out into the track and wheeled the horse; he was about a hundred yards ahead of them. “Where in the name-o’-God you think you going!”

The little group of a dozen or so froze to ice and stood there staring with open mouths as if at the avenging angel. One of them had his open cannikin halfway to his face; he held it there in front of him for a second then straightened his fingers. The bottle clumped to the ground and at the noise the group broke like a covey of partridges and scattered right and left into the woods. He bellowed after them; but it was of no use.

He kicked the horse into a gallop down the road he had followed that morning toward the fort.

At the first bend he came on a squad of five, straggling along happily through the forest. “Listen to me!” he shouted at them as they froze like the others. “What sort of patriots you call yourselves! Are you fighting for liberty and independence, or for a mugful of brandy and a new coat—”

“You said we could go home, Colonel.”

“I said you could go after the fight was done—”

“We got the fort, ain’t we?”

“We done our duty.”

"This fight's only half won!" he shouted.

"I got to go see 'bout my folks—"

"Listen to me, you drunken fool—"

"We be back end of the week, Colonel."

He loosened his right toe to swing down and talk to them man to man. But when they saw him dismounting they dropped their rifles and muskets and started to run. Some sprang into the woods, some dodged past him and raced away. In a minute he was alone, sitting there half out of the saddle, his scabbard slapping at his knee; he should have drawn his saber,—no,—

He dismounted, looped the reins over the horse's sweat-washed neck and started walking down the track. When he saw another group of them coming toward him, laughing, talking, singing, he sat down on a blackgum log an old storm had felled. "Come here, boys," he said, leaning an elbow on his knee. He extended his hand as he might have done to his grandchildren: he understood; they weren't "deserters." They were just going home to spend a few days with their folks. They wanted to talk about it; they wanted to tell some tall tales; there was dang little fun in a war until you could talk about it. They would be back.

"When you run a fox to ground you don't pull up stakes and leave him there." He laid his cocked hat on the log and looked at them slouching there in front of him, hugging their new blankets and boots, their pockets bulging with cheap necklaces and bracelets for their women and children.

Some of them lowered their eyes to their feet, some stared off down the trail or into the woods or into the blue sky,—anywhere but at him.

"When you tree a wildcat you don't go off and leave him there.—You've trapped the bloodybacks on the Upper Road. You've got 'em penned in a house up there. But you ain't whipped 'em yet! They still got a fight in 'em—"

"We run 'em plumb out o' Fort Fred, didn't we, Colonel?"

"You did, but that ain't enough—"

A man in the back started singing, "Now, shoulder whoop!—Eyes right and dress!—Front! Soger wipe your nose—"

He strutted off down the track, two or three following him, several turning to look.

"You, son. What's your name?"

"Grenel, sir."

"What's your platoon?"

"Second Platoon, 'C' Company."

"I need your help, Grenel. Out there on the Upper Road where I've just come from we've run the British hirelings to ground. I want you to help me dig 'em out.—Will you do it?"

The boy fumbled with the ramrod of his musket.

"Go back to your platoon, what's left of it. Tell your lieutenant I sent you."

Grenel stood motionless in indecision then shouldered his gun and set out down the road toward the fort, looking straight ahead.

Clarke saw two or three of them watching Grenel. "What's *your* name, son?" he said to one of them. But as he spoke the boy and all the rest broke away and ran.

He talked to others on the Middle Road; after a while he mounted the horse and spurred into a lane on the outskirts of the settlement. When he came out on the Lower Road he got down and started the futile arguments again. It was the same as before. To every one he turned back there were ten who went on their way. Shortly before noon he found himself at the post marking the east boundary of Fredericksburg; over the black roofs of the cabins he could see the top of the palisade of the fort and McCall's flag on the staff. He pulled himself wearily into the saddle and rode at a walk sunken-chested to the main gate.

As he came closer he heard McCall's drums; he guided the horse beneath a cedar tree in the churchyard before the gatehouse and sat there limp-shouldered in the shadow, counting the files as they marched out of the stockade and wound off into the Broad Street and the Upper Road toward the White House. The sight stabbed deep into his soul; as the last of them emerged from the gate and

in a moment disappeared round the corner of a storehouse he watched the little dust cloud blowing away, the tears tumbling over the rims of his eyes. There were seventy-six riflemen, all told. There might have been three hundred and eight. Not merely that all this extreme toil should, maybe, have been wasted now; that the whole campaign, which they had planned months ago and labored on day and night through all the sultry summer, should now, maybe, come to nothing. There was another and deeper failure than all that: their failure to understand,—failure in their very sinews, in the very marrow of what they were fighting for. Fighting for their independence, fighting to lift themselves out of the despised category of “our colonials,” fighting to build a nation, to govern themselves,—one man cared and four cared not at all. One man thought of freedom, and four, of themselves and their folks and their farms and their cattle and their sweethearts—

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AT THE BEGINNING of the last period Harry Hall leaned into the room with his hand still on the knob of the door, half whispered, “Wait for me,” at George, and vanished. George was sorry; he didn’t feel like talking. Though he didn’t feel like being alone either. Whatever he did, or didn’t do, would be wrong; there would be no satisfaction in it, no satisfaction in anything until he had seen her and straightened out this ridiculous quarrel.

He wasn’t angry any more. His anger had hardly lasted through the evening, draining out drop by drop as the hours passed and his hopes disappeared she might call him. By morning even his stubbornness had broken; he had done nothing he was sorry for, nothing to ask her forgiveness for, but he was ready to ask it. That he had done what he felt he had to do, that he still believed he had been right in going to the jury, such things made no difference: what profiteth it a man if he gain his soul and lose the whole world?

He had expected to be stronger than this. He wasn't young any more; he knew from his hours with her that the flame of desire could burn in him as brightly as ever, but he had thought he had a better control of it now. And yet if that was so, why could he not simply reconstruct his world without her? Why should a misunderstanding bring his world to ashes as easily as it would have done when he was twenty? And the irony of it that the cause of their misunderstanding had already been removed! He was through with it; he had done what he had to do and now was free. The thing was out of his hands now, taken over by stronger hands than his; he had nothing more to worry about,—except having lost the whole world—

He tried to tell himself he was even thinking like an adolescent: a little quarrel, a little misunderstanding, that he would smile back on a few days from now, and he exaggerating it into a disaster—

He waited for Hall just inside the broad, peaked doorway of the front entrance, his briefcase under his arm, his hands in the pockets of his raincoat, his old felt hat glumly over his eyes. Beyond the bare flagstaff a curtain of blue-gray mist had sponged away the chimneys and spires of Fredericksville in the valley, leaving before him only a close, impenetrable veil—as if the afternoon had quarreled with its sun. Every line and angle the same as before: the parade ground, the track, the practice field, the bowl of the little stadium half scooped out of the hill where hardly yesterday it had all begun, where "Visitors" then had meant "Staug Hi" and tomorrow would mean "Chat Ac,"—and yet everything completely different, different down to the minutest detail, as if every particle of the sensory world had been deftly turned inside out—

"O.K., old boy." Harry pointed his umbrella at the sky and stretched it open. They walked out of the sodden grounds and turned up the hill, Hall talking on and on about teachers' pay; he had just read that New York street cleaners started out at \$2,000. "You and I don't do much better than that right now. My wife was telling me about Mrs. Turner's cook, Cleo: Cleo said, 'Mrs. Turner, I can make the best pie you ever et but I can't make it for what you

pay me.' I think we ought to send a delegation up to the Legislature and tell them just exactly that—"

He didn't feel like talking. He had thought, when Harry asked him to wait, there had been something definite on his mind; if it was merely to rehash this wornout topic he would rather have walked home in his aloneness.

"What are you going to do with people? Did you see in the Princeton University poll that nearly a third of 'em didn't know the Japs had occupied the Philippines—"

He thought he wouldn't call her; he would simply go to Jane, as soon as she had had time to finish dinner. Ask Jane to go across the yard and get her—

"George, I want to pass this on to you for what it's worth," Harry said in a tone of putting all that away. "Maybe it isn't worth anything. You're the best judge of that." He paused a moment and George turned his eyes on him; he had had something on his mind after all.

"I've heard,—Saggus told me, as a matter of fact. I'd just been talking to her when I looked in your door. Saggus said the Powers, capital P, had had old Crumbley on the phone. They're pretty upset about your visit to the grand jury—"

He couldn't help pivoting his head and staring at Hall over his shoulder. But Harry gave no sign of noticing it. "In fact I understand 'upset' is hardly the word—"

"Why can't I go before the grand jury? I'm a citizen." He considered explaining how he had happened to go but something in him asked why he should explain anything.

"I'm just telling you what Saggus said. Maybe it's all exaggerated; probably is, Saggus being Saggus.—I reckon you knew they called Buden down there this morning and held his feet to the fire for an hour. Then they let him go and called in the mayor."

"I knew that was the plan—"

"But, old boy!" Hall laughed incredulously and became speechless, waving the handle of the umbrella. "Or have you lined up

something better in the street-cleaning department? Are you tired of teaching—”

“There’s nothing in the *Rules* that says a teacher can’t go before a grand jury—”

“Discretion, George, discretion—”

“And even if there were it wouldn’t stand up in a public hearing.”

“But you’ve put Buden and the mayor on the spot. *You*, a hired man, working for about the pay of a good janitor!” His tone changed to one of real concern: “George, they can wash you out of here so quick it’ll make you dizzy. You’ve broken rules; everybody has. Not to amount to anything, but if they want to interpret it strictly,—what about coming in late now and then on Monday morning?”

“They’d have to think up something better than that for a public hearing. Besides, I’ve more than made up the few lost periods. My record’s good. The whole idea behind Tenure was to free a man from political pressure—”

“Of course, maybe it won’t come up at all. Let’s hope not.—I just wanted to tell you, you understand.”

“Oh, sure. I understand. I appreciate it.”

“Maybe the Board won’t really give it a thought—”

“I suppose it looks like a fool thing to have done. But I had to do it. Sometimes I get so sick of just talking about something that’s wrong that the chance of doing something about it’s almost irresistible—”

“It won’t look foolish if it comes out all right. But you’re taking a terrible chance.”

“It seemed like a mighty important thing to me. Still does. I know when a man says something’s important to him he sounds like a stuffed shirt; but that’s just part of the price and I’m willing to pay it.—I can’t make this thing sound the way it seems to me; every time I talk about it I sound like a damn fool. It’s the sort of thing you’re supposed to want to do and be unable to do; if you’re able

to and go on and do it, why, you look like a nut." He laughed hoping to escape the charge of taking himself too seriously.'

"You don't have a family to take care of, old boy—"

They stopped in front of Hall's little one-story house and stood for a minute or two under the umbrella. But there wasn't much more to be said: Harry had told him all he had heard; beyond that they were talking merely on the basis of surmises. George thanked him for the information, hunched the raincoat up about his neck and walked on through the settling mist.

It was common knowledge, then, or soon would be; something like that would burn a hole in Saggus's tongue. There was no way of guessing who had called old Crumbley but he had an idea it was somebody on the fringes, passing the gossip along; if anything was to come of it it wouldn't come through Crumbley. But anyhow, the fact was out and he found that a little disconcerting; he certainly hadn't counted on its getting out so quickly. Eventually, yes; he had probably assumed that; but not within twenty-four hours—

Well, what of it? What difference did it make to him if everybody knew he had gone to the jury? Yes, he had gone; somebody had to go.—The only difference was it made an issue of it. The Board had either to forgive it or do something about it; they couldn't just pretend they hadn't heard it. But at the same time it brought the matter out into the open. If the Board did anything about it the public would know why—

What would he do if they asked for his resignation? They probably wouldn't but just suppose they did; that was the worst they could do. He would refuse to resign. If they fired him he would demand a public hearing; that was his right. They would have to show the people something more against him than that he had gone before a grand jury. And they wouldn't be able to show anything; his work was more than just satisfactory; his record was better than merely good. Technically they might be able to dismiss a teacher for cutting a few classes but that would be a pretty drastic sentence,—especially for a public hearing. Even if they claimed he was neglecting his duties, with old Crumbley testifying to his

having left his class to make telephone calls, they could hardly establish a case for firing him; not with the public listening. Behind closed doors they might have fired him. But closing the doors was not such a simple thing in America; the people didn't like it. And when the doors were open and the people were listening—well, justice might not always be perfect but he wouldn't suffer any flagrant wrong. The public hearing was his protection; the people, the mere presence of the people. If the Board acted he could bring it all before the people; it would be an exact repetition of what had happened in the Winn matter and the people would be on his side as they were on Winn's—

The Winn matter? "The Winn matter" was on an inside page this morning. There was one letter; signed "Citizen." Hadn't he better hope this wouldn't be too much like the Winn matter?

Oh, his mind had run too far ahead of the facts. The only facts were that he had gone to the jury, that the jury had called Buden and the mayor, that George Cliatt, a teacher, was responsible; from there to dismissing him was a big jump. It might never be attempted. In the meantime "the Winn matter" was the principal question; if the people seemed to have quieted down a little they were undoubtedly still simmering and a strong statement from the jury would rouse them again, quite possibly to a greater indignation than before, coming on top of all the rest—

He pushed his damp hat off his forehead and searched about on the desk for a telephone message. Then he climbed the inside stairs and studied the blank pad on the telephone table. He asked Martha, passing through the hall with a metal tray, if there had been any calls for him, putting it in the plural as if there was no one of particular importance. When she said No, he could feel the rain beginning to close down again on his spirit. He went back downstairs, hung up his hat and raincoat.

In the dining room he unrolled his napkin, spread it on his knees, then quietly rolled it up again and screwed it into the wooden ring. He got his hat, put his arms into the chilly coat, and walked out to

the shed in the backyard and the compartment labeled "Cliatt." The old car coughed and spit a few times, stalled, then caught hold.

He talked to Jane on the slanted porch of Lieutenant Cassidy's little wooden house, hardly able to believe his ears.

She wasn't happy . . . living with your in-laws is likely to be a strain on anybody . . . saying for weeks it was time for her to go home. I tried to get her to come over here and visit me . . . more or less at loose ends like that, no regular home of your own, you get oversensitive about being wanted; you get filled with doubts about everything . . . I tried to make her talk about it but she wouldn't. I tried to make her wait a day or two—

"What's her father's address?"

"I've got a good mind not to tell you. You oughtn't to have let her go like that—"

"Give me the address."

She went inside and came back in a minute with it written on a piece of paper: Karl Bohlender, R.F.D. 4, Dayton—

He sat in the car staring at the strange address that belonged to a part of her he didn't know,—as what she had done seemed to belong to an Allen he didn't know, to spring from strains and conflicts he had been too blind to see; as the strange stiff manner, too, of her kissing him that night on the canalbank suggested a side of her quite different from her apparent warmth and candor—

Suppose he cashed the war bond he had bought with his meter-reading salary, took the next train to Dayton—

He couldn't do that. He had classes tomorrow. And besides, he couldn't abandon the incident now at the very moment when the jury's findings might clinch the outcome he had been driving for. He could telephone her. Not yet, but tonight maybe; she wouldn't have got there yet. Listen. I'm miserable. You can't do this to me. You either come down here and marry me in Fredericksburg or I'm coming up there—

He put the paper in his pocket and started the motor. He wished he could forget it for a while; anything to forget it . . .

Mac was leaning a hand against a corner of the filling station

gazing dreamily over into the field at the crowd which George couldn't help noticing was many times larger than it had been the day before. There was a line of men and women on the canalbank looking down on the heads of the people below, and along the dirt road a good number were walking in from Broad Street; he saw an old woman with crutches patiently heaving herself over the mud.

There were the people. There, really, were the people. Gathered from all round, standing in the misty rain. Waiting for the presentments of the grand jury? Indignant at what had been done to them? Well, maybe they were. If they weren't it was because they didn't understand, because nobody had explained to them how they had been wronged. If somebody explained that to them, brought before them the facts the jury was going to present, made them understand that by turning their attention to the wrong done them they could make for themselves a better life right here on this earth, they would listen, they would respond. You can have a better hospital for these cripples of yours, you can have better schools for your children, you can have schools for grown-ups; you can improve your health, you can live longer in this land which the Lord thy God hath given thee—

“Hey there, Professor!”

“I just remembered I owed you for six gallons of gas—”

“Oh, that's all right. Your credit's good as gold here, Professor.”

He gave him two dollars and Mac rang it up on the cash register and brought him the change. “You want to see Jack; he's over yonder in the field.”

“No. Tell him I went to the jury. They'll be publishing their findings in a day or so, maybe tomorrow.”

Mac laughed with a kindly indulgence. “I'll sure tell him, Professor.”

As he drove out into Broad Street he heard a wail of singing coming in over the field on the damp air. In front of the White House a traffic policeman who hadn't been there earlier held him up while a patrolman solicitously took the bridle of a horse and led a wagonload of men, women and children across the old car tracks

and started it down the road toward the canalbank. The singing stopped and he could see men on the edge of the crowd taking off their hats as if someone over in the center of the field were beginning to pray— .

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WHEN THE SMELL of the rabbit-tobacco began to come to him through the dark Bruce knew he must be nearly to the center of the field. His hands were as wet from crawling in the dew as if he had dipped them into the spring; the sleeves of his shirt, heavy and clinging with the moisture, hung with a depressing chill about his wrists and elbows. He knew how they would look when the day broke, the homespun cloth black-wet, the skin of his hands shining with a deathly gray,—his forepaws, like an animal's, dripping with the night damp. You fought for freedom on your four legs, on your belly, in the red mud and the black mud, in the pink dust and the white, with your ears full of sounds that wouldn't wash away and your nose lined with smells that would be with you when you died and your flesh coated with the sores of war until your very soul grew dull under a half-dormant nausea. Six years if it. Six years, one month, ten days. And almost a circle; from Weatherford round to Weatherford again. And if they took the house would that mean freedom?—Well, anyhow, it would mean that tomorrow, or in a few days,—he would ask colonel for a horse and he would ride north to the cabin on Kettle Creek; with bad news, certainly, for what was a military victory to Mrs. Carter? But beyond the bad news, a few months beyond it, perhaps her eyes would look at him again and she would become Thursa—

He stopped in the field and looked back over his haunches like a fox into the solid layers of dark under the star-pricked lid of the sky, the cover of moist air over the river below him beginning to stir, everything quiet except now and then a whimper from the house of the man somebody had wounded just after sunset, not as loud as it had been, and now and then a random musket shot

from the top of the hill, and a continuous soft rustling like a lazy wind which he knew was the men crawling after him through the broomsedge,—whom they hadn't dared tell about the deserters that weren't exactly deserters, who had cheered the little column of reinforcements with a rising heart, apparently not perceiving at all that it was about a quarter as long as it might have been—

The old man dropping weary and wrinkled off the horse and calling the officers. "If the bloodybacks guess our strength they'll make a break for it tonight."

Keeping up a show all night, by shifts, resting a little then going on with a determined fire into the shuttered windows, tired deep into his body as if the very hollow of his bones was tired. String out your men across the field, John, while it's night; at first day, God willing, we'll roust the bastards out of there man to man,—squatting in the rabbit-tobacco, laying his wet hand on the warm backs of the men crawling past in file below him, counting them, waving them on toward the pine woods on the other side that he could perceive only by a starlessness at the bottom of the sky.

He was facing down the slope toward the river when he heard the shot and he raised his head and turned it in each direction, not so much looking, for there was nothing to see, but turning his ears. He couldn't place it, except that he was sure it hadn't come from the house behind him. It was also too faint to have been fired by one of the men in the field, or by one of the company with Clarke in the woods they had left.

He waited, his head fixed, his ears feeling as if they had lifted up. But the night had grown still again,—as still and bland as a schoolroom when a spitball stung the back of your neck. He wondered if there might not have been a sentry down in the river bottom who had fired accidentally. Any shot was contrary to their plan, but—after all, there was nothing about it to betray their approach; he thought no harm had been done, and he took up his count of the men again, laying his hand on their warm backs.—Eleven more and half would have passed. That was the distribution he wanted. The rest of the night would be sitting there in the wet weeds—

Ten more, nine more, eight—

Then, in the midst of reaching out his hand toward the eighth, the shot came again,—small, with a quick fine threadlike echo. He stared through the dark at the high ground of Carolina, kneeling there motionless, wondering if he could have lost his bearings sufficiently to have a shot from McCall's guard at Fort Frederick sound as if it came from across the river. There was nothing on that high ground, except maybe a farmhouse—facing out on the trail from Ninety-Six. But even as the picture flashed into his thoughts of Cruger firing a signal to Browne to hold on, he dismissed it as impossible. Might not a gunshot from the fort echo against the high land and—

Then there were two more shots coming quickly upon each other and he knew they came from across the river. Any lingering doubt in his mind about it was dispelled immediately by the sudden burst of yells and shouts that broke from the house,—cries of such irrepressible ecstasy that, even in the surge of his dismay, he felt a fiber of sympathy respond within him. Somehow they had got a messenger through; somehow Cruger had covered the distance. It didn't matter how. Those were undoubtedly the facts,—wiping out the old dilemmas of a moment before, setting up new dilemmas fitting the new facts, a new problem on the slate, new characters in a new scene,—*exeunt omnes, enter with drum and colors, Boling-broke*—



GEORGE FRUGALLY CUT off the motor at the top of the driveway and coasted down the incline, round in a wide quarter-circle over the crunching furnace ashes and into the section of Mrs. D'Antel's open sheds labelled "Cliatt." What now? The knowledge she had gone changed the scene like a snowfall, changed the appearance of everything, outside, inside—

He leaned his forearm on the steering wheel and in the silence listened to the slow scattered rain dripping from the pecan tree onto

the tin roof with the curious creaking sound of a loaded cart dragging up the ruts of a country hill. What was there about doing something you thought was right that made you feel like such a consummate fool? It was as if you had better do right with discretion; being caught at it red-handed was like being, as the preachers so coolly put it, "taken in adultery,"—as if society had a punishment for merely the overt act, one kind as well as another; as if the threat to it lay simply in the existence of a transgression—

But what now? He had transgressed; he had stepped out of line and he had been caught. As Buden, incidentally, had been caught; except that Buden could make a public apology and set it all back the way it had been,—or would have done so had there been no one individual fool enough to stand up. He supposed, in truth, he felt a little bitter about it: were "the people" really on anybody's side? Did they have any convictions, one way or another, that weren't counteracted by opposite convictions just as strong? Today they looked to him like a river gliding implacably down its valley, as unconcerned with good and evil as a flood, as blind to their advantage as steers galloping to the slaughter,—mooing hymns of resignation. Turning their current this way or that was like trying to put a dam across the Savannah or throw up a levee; it could be done if there were enough of you who wanted to,—or if you were just one and had the tools of persuasion. The trouble was Buden and his backers had all the tools—

Or was he looking for an excuse? He had tools. At this very moment, on the other side of town, there were a thousand people gathered together—

He wouldn't do it. He had done enough. It was time to save himself; if he hadn't already waited too long. If they tried to force his resignation, fight it; demand a hearing; bring it out for all the people to listen to. Mr. Dobit had fought it once and he had won, to a limited degree. They might transfer him, too, to some little school in the country but they wouldn't have blighted his career, uprooted his life—

Yet, his life was already uprooted. He thought if it should be

come a fact that he had lost her, which he rejected now as he rejected the idea of his own death, nothing else would matter and he could as easily imagine himself accepting without protest whatever decision the Board made, accepting without response whatever statement the jury made, as imagine himself, in a sort of desperation, nothing more to lose, making one final effort and selling his defeat as dearly as possible. Without her he wouldn't care.

He had known that all along, hadn't he? Though it might not have been so clearly on the surface as now; it was she who had renewed his strength, opened his eyes. That he should have opened them to see anything else than her was merely an accident of time; whatever he saw was through her, almost literally through a transparency that glimmered like water with an endless chain of tiny waves of mannerisms, tones, words, movements, details of her body beyond the trivial hindrance of her clothes, her shoulders that were almost frail, the long rounding slope of her hips. She knew that; there couldn't have been any doubt in her mind of what she meant to him.

Unless she had suddenly lost all sympathy for him on account of his apparently persistent disregard for her wishes, which he could not believe, why had she done what she had? He could understand how she might have had a temporarily misguided disgust for "causes," an uncontrollable desire to escape into the personal, the individual; he could even understand how she might have been sure that her foresight was better than his in picturing the results of his interference in Winn's arrest; he could understand how, if that were so, she might have been willing to go to great lengths to compel him to desist. But he could not understand how, when she saw he was going to see it through, must see it through, she went on with her impulsive plan. She must have known he wouldn't let it end there, without seeing her again, talking to her again.

He wondered if it was remotely possible she had been counting on precisely that. Knowing his love for her, and it must have shone through everything he did, through the apparent distractions and all, she had made this drastic move in the final hope of drawing

him away? She had shown herself unalterably convinced of the folly of what he was doing; she was wrong but that was her conviction; could she have hoped he might follow her, break his obsession with this thing if only for a few days, come to his senses?—of course not!—And yet she had left her address, hadn't she? Written out in her own straight, peculiarly competent-looking hand, to be given him when he came to ask for it, as she knew he would—

He was dreaming and this was no time for dreams.

It was a dream for the simple reason that he had taken the decisive step before she had gone; that couldn't be retracted. If she had thought there might be yet further steps and she could prevent them—

All on the assumption of failure. Assuming the jury would not pay any attention to him, assuming the people were through with it, assuming he would be dismissed; afraid, after what had happened to her, to expect anything of life but loss.—If he could reach her on the telephone he might persuade her: It's all over now and I'm still a teacher in the Frederick Academy,—but a very lonesome one—

He heard a smooth Negro voice calling him from the house. "Mr. Cli-att!" They must have seen his car drive in, as they saw everything else. "Telephone, please, Mr. Cliatt."

A tidal wave of hope surged up in him, sweeping over the barriers of his common sense as if it had been a ridge of sand; the mere sound of her voice on the miles of wire would wash everything clean—

He ran up the slope to his balcony, through the apartment and up the inside stairs, his hat still on his head because to throw it on his desk or on a chair would have required an instant's change of thought and all he could think of was getting to the telephone as quickly as possible without shouting decrepitude at her over the wires with his heavy breathing. He said, "Hello," with a cheerfulness he tried to restrain.

He was dashed out of his dreams by a fine bass voice. "This is Lang Chatham, Professor Cliatt."

Half-heartedly he attempted to remember the name; there was a sort of dim familiarity about it, as if it were, say, the parent of one of his new boys.

"You remember I stopped by to see you a minute last Friday."

"Oh, yes! Yes," all the embarrassing dilemma returning to him, the side-stepping decision like handing a dime to a beggar—

"Something has just come to my attention, sir, I think you ought to know about. I'd like to come by there and see you for just a few minutes if it's at all possible. I could be there in a quarter of an hour."

He was tempted to say he couldn't see him; he had too many other things on his mind to talk about it again. He had forgotten it; he wanted it to stay forgotten. He had no idea of changing his decision,—though, now that he thought of it, he felt much less uneasy than before; he had an answer for himself: I wouldn't do that, it's true, but on the other hand—

"All right, Lang. I'm pretty busy but come ahead."

When he hung up he turned immediately to the telephone book, as if he had been thinking of something else all along. He dialed the ticket office at the railroad station and asked about trains to Dayton. A whining woman's voice said, "We have two trains to Dayton. One out of here at 2:10 A.M.; change in Atlanta and pick up the Southern out of there at 8:40, arriving Dayton 1:20 A.M.; the other leaving here—".

He thanked her and sat for a moment looking gloomily at the wall in front of him; the earliest he could possibly speak to her was tomorrow. And not even tomorrow morning; he would have to wait until after school—

As he opened the inner door of his faintly earth-smelling rooms he heard a knocking on the glass of the door from the balcony. He stopped in the living room long enough to take some books off the straight chair on which Lang had sat the last time; then, glancing toward the curtain, he saw through it the rigid outline of a hard black hat and he opened the door to Mr. Dobit.

"Have you got a few minutes?" Mr. Dobit asked him with a

solemn abruptness, giving his closed umbrella a vigorous shake and coming inside without waiting for an answer.

“I’ve got a colored man stopping by here after a while—”

“If it had ever occurred to me, George,” Mr. Dobit said with no sign of having heard him, standing there with his turned-up rubbers protruding a ridiculous length out of his tight trousers; “if I had thought for a second *you* were going to the jury I’d never have come in here and suggested it.”

“Oh,” George said, smiling a little, taking the umbrella and standing it on the hearth. “Well, it’s over the dam now—”

“George, I hate to seem to be always meddling in your affairs. I haven’t committed you to anything and if you’ve got something better in prospect, why, all right; no harm’s been done.”

George watched him lay his hat on the desk and stuff his hands in his pants’ pockets. “What are you talking about?”

“When I heard early this morning you’d been to the jury I called an old friend of mine, Ben Bruce, up in Wrightsboro. If I’d known anybody well enough who was in a better position to do something I wouldn’t have called Ben. But Ben and I were at the University together and I knew anything he could do he would be more than glad to do. Ben’s superintendent of schools in Wright County. It just happens his history teacher in the high school is going to the Army on Monday—”

“Wait a minute—”

“Of course it isn’t anything like what you ought to have but it’ll tide you over. You would start out at \$1,800—”

“Hold on here!”

“Wrightsboro’s not a bad little town; fifteen or twenty thousand. You know Wrightsboro.”

“I know Wrightsboro well enough but—”

“You might find a dollar goes farther there than it does down here—”

“You seem to think I’m through in Fredericksville.”

The old man seated himself on the edge of the straight chair and

gazed down into the coal-scuttle of lightwood splinters. "George, you are most certainly through in Fredericksville."

Even though he didn't believe it it was a shock to hear it actually put into words. "What about Tenure?" he said in a moment.

"Oh, you can fight it. I don't see what possible charge they can bring against you. But suppose you fought it, suppose you won; you'd just be holding what you have. You're a young man. Your future's before you. It would do something to you to see yourself passed over year after year. What you have is worth holding on to at forty but it won't be at sixty. At sixty I want to see you head of History at the University of Georgia." He smiled slightly.

He thought Mr. Dobit was unduly sensitive to the possibility of trouble on account of his own experience but he didn't like to say so and seem to belittle the old man's concern,—for which he felt grateful beyond words—

"Aren't you overlooking something?" George said to him, the scrawny square of Wrightsboro bare under the gaze of His Excellency Sir James Wright, Baronet, Captain General of his Majesty's Province of Georgia, Chancellor, Vice Admiral and Ordinary of the same. "Look here. When this jury comes out backing up everything Winn has said the whole thing may take on a different light. Suppose they demand some court action against Buden; suppose he's convicted, has to resign. I shouldn't be 'through in Fredericks-ville' then—"

"Who is this colored man coming to see you? Friend of yours?"

George reminded him of Lang's request he tutor the Negro children.

"They might even use that. They can always fall back on that sort of thing if there's nothing else."

"Now that *is* a little far-fetched."

"Maybe they'll find something else. I don't know. One thing I know: you certainly won't be charged with testifying before a grand jury.—And incidentally, I reckon you're wondering how I knew you'd been to the jury." He walked over to the desk and picked up his hard hat.

"Those things seem to get round," George said with a tinge of weariness.

"I had a telephone call this morning at five minutes after eight. It was long distance." He paused, looked at George, then away. "Atlanta.—That's how I learned it."

George lifted his eyes to find the old man gazing steadily at him. "It was a young woman's voice. She didn't tell me her name so I didn't ask. But she seemed to know all about it. I told her I would do all I could; which, of course, is practically nothing. Except I did call Ben Bruce as I told you.—Now why don't you come out and have supper with us in a little while—"

"Did she say anything else?"

"Only that she had to call me early because she was taking a train. I said, 'It had better be a train to Fredericksburg, Miss.' She waited a good while then rang off.—Now I don't know what the hell this foolishness is all about, of course, but—"

There was a light knock at the front door and Mr. Dobit reached for his umbrella. "I'll go out through the house," he said in a whisper. "I'll see you later."

George thanked him and shook his head. He opened the inner door for him. Halfway up the stairs Mr. Dobit pointed the umbrella at him. "Telephone me at home what you want me to do about Wrightsboro," he said and disappeared.

George stood there for a few seconds trying to think of what the old man had come to tell him but able to grasp nothing beyond a picture of daybreak in the Atlanta station and her fingers dropping nickels and dimes into the rubbed telephone, looking back at him over her shoulder—

The light knock was repeated patiently. He took a deep breath, annoyed Lang should press the matter after such a definite answer.—Oh, weren't they all, Mr. Dobit, Hall, he himself, jumping to conclusions? There was no indication whatever the Board would do anything, even consider doing anything. Worry about that when the Board acted; in the meantime put all that aspect of it aside, get back to the arrest and what the people could do about it without

Winn. There was plenty they could do, if they wanted to—if they wanted to. As for himself, if charges were brought, fight them in a public hearing, establish his innocence; then later, if advancement seemed impossible—

What difference did advancement make, innocence? All that was of no—

“Come in, Lang.” He shut the door with perhaps a shade of displeasure and motioned at the chair.

“I won’t sit down, thank you, sir. It won’t take but a minute what I want to tell you. But I didn’t like to talk on the phone; it’s just meant for your ears and nobody else’s.”

George sat against the edge of his desk and crossed his ankles. He felt tired, physically and mentally; he wished Lang meant literally a minute but he thought the best he could hope for was a quarter of an hour.

“As I told you last week, sir, we keep up with the way things are in the white folks’ world.” He smiled a little. “Every cook in the City of Fredericksburg, you know, is one of my people. Every wastebasket that’s emptied in the City of Fredericksburg is emptied by one of my people. We know the way the wind is blowing. Often-times we know the way the wind’s going to blow.”

George held out a pack of cigarettes and when Lang shook his head, took one himself and felt in his pockets for a match.

“What I came to tell you was, the charge against you, sir, if you’ll pardon me for speaking plainly, is very likely to involve ‘moral turpitude.’”

George stared at him beyond the open folder of matches, the cigarette dangling from his lips. Lang lowered his eyes and revolved the brim of his hat in his pink-lined fingers. “Please understand, sir, I mention all this with the greatest regret. I thought it might be of some service to you to know ahead of time—”

“Oh, yes, yes. That’s all right.”

“They’ll probably also point to your lack of affiliation with any church.”

George inserted the cigarette back into the top of the package.

"Of course the 'moral' charge wouldn't have to have any foundation at all; it would still be hard to contest because one has to consider others—"

"Where'd you get all this?"

Lang continued to stroke his hat for a second in silence then he said quietly, "I can't tell you, sir. I'm sorry. You'll just have to trust me."

He wondered if it was possible the Negro had been sent to frighten him into resigning; they wouldn't really dare bring such a charge because there was simply nothing to build it on. "And what are the 'moral' charges based on, please?" he said, unable to keep the scorn out of his voice even though conscious the Negro might actually be trying to help him.

Lang hesitated. "I'd rather not go into that, sir, but if you insist—" "I insist."

The Negro shifted his weight from one of his black wet shoes to the other then settled himself on both, glancing up at George. "They would base it on the testimony, sir, of two county patrolmen who would allege they saw your car parked on the Middle Road late last Friday night. Of course, sir, if you could prove you were not in the car—"

George caught himself as he was about to shout of course he was in the car. He drew himself up straight and looked the Negro in the eyes. "Are you sent here by these people?"

Lang lowered his head; he moved it slowly from side to side in a patient negative and after a few seconds said quietly, "No, sir." He looked about for the door as if he had mislaid it, found the knob, put his hand on it, turned it. "No, sir, didn't anybody know I was coming here but me. The information reached me a little after four and I tried to get in touch with you right away, though I knew it wasn't going to be easy to bring you such news. Still, I wanted you to have it to make any use of you liked,—or could. Nothing may come of it; you understand that. But I believe you can count on this: if charges *are* made they'll be the ones I've mentioned." He bowed, opened the door just wide enough to pass through and

moved sideways on to the balcony, closing the panel with a soft click behind him.

George gazed into the nearly opaque curtains without moving. He thought he believed the man. But even if Lang had lied to him, even if Lang had been sent, that didn't alter the fact this weapon was in their hands,—and the fact there was almost no defense he could make against it. If he made any resistance he would have to hear her name—

He sank down on the straight chair and sat there for a long time motionless. After a while he noticed the room had become completely dark except for the familiar dim gleam of the street light striking into his corner window. He stood up, switched on the old gooseneck lamp at the back of his desk and leaned there, stiff-armed, gazing down among his papers without seeing them. There was really no decision he had to make, was there? There was really no choice but to resign, take the job at Wrightsboro; be glad there was an opening at Wrightsboro to step into. If the people were incapable of seeing the gigantic folly of handing their children over to be educated by a political machine—

He leaned over beside his desk and picked up his portable typewriter. He set it on the front of the desk, drew up his chair, spun a white sheet of paper into the rollers and wrote his address in the upper corner. When he came to the date he hesitated, then wrote the word "November." Today was the fifth. Perhaps he should date it the sixth and make it "effective this date"; finish out the week.

He took his hands off the keys and folded them in his lap. What if he waited a day or two? Wait until the presentments of the jury were published. They might change everything; on the strength of them the people might rise in an indignation greater than before, rise and overthrow Buden and the whole lot of them; he could tell at once, as soon as the findings were printed, whether there was any prospect of that. If the people became really aroused to their danger there would be no cause to resign at all—

How long would it be before the jury published its findings? He thought he couldn't wait very long; he wouldn't want to, anyway.

And the longer it took to publish them the less chance there would be of building on the indignation of Tuesday and Wednesday; if the presentments were being published tomorrow, or even Saturday—

He stared at the keys for a second then stood up. He could call the morning paper and ask; they would probably know. Or better still, there was just a possibility it would be in the *Journal*.

He snatched open his desk drawer, lifted out the flashlight and walked outside. The damp paper was lying in its usual place beside the step. He put the flashlight in his pocket and started unfolding the sheets as he crossed the balcony; he spread it out under the lamp:

GERMANS FLOOD ITALY COAST AREA—

NIP CONVOY BOMBED—

“PETRIFIED” MAN EXHUMED ON  
UPPER BROAD; CROWDS GATHER  
ON CANALBANK AS BOY PRAYS

MAIMED AND CRIPPLED WAIT IN RAIN WHILE  
“DOODYE” WHYBARK, 10, CONDUCTS REVIVAL  
SERVICE; “PROMISED MIRACLE,” BOY CLAIMS

Crowds estimated by observers at between 1,000 and 1,500 congregated reverently this afternoon, standing patiently in a heavy drizzle as little ten-year-old Joseph (“Doodye”) Whybark, 14 Martin Alley, with an escort of burly policemen . . . Whether the boy saw the Angel Gabriel as he claimed . . . the Angel had promised “something wonderful will happen” . . . Many persons brought flowers, photographs of sons killed in the war—

He opened the paper and ran his eye over the second page. There was nothing there; nothing on the third page. In the middle of page four he saw a brief article headed:

JURY ACCEPTS BUDEN REQUEST  
FOR HEARING ON WINN AFFAIR

FINDINGS EXPECTED TO BE MADE PUBLIC  
TOMORROW OR SATURDAY FOREMAN SAYS—

He went back and read the last line again, lifting his eyes to the mantelpiece and repeating "Tomorrow or Saturday" half-aloud; the full and unweighted facts would be given to the people tomorrow or Saturday—foreman says—

He pulled the paper out of the typewriter, crumpled it up and dropped it in his wastebasket—

## SIX

*Cloudy, continued light rain. Cooler tonight; Saturday fair and cool . . .*

**I**T WAS NOT so much a waking from sleep as abandoning efforts to swim in a knee-deep pool, as throwing aside a coat so ragged you couldn't find the sleeves. He pulled the lamp cord by the bed; the square-shouldered, loud-strutting alarm clock pointed its forthright hands at four minutes to seven. He got up and found a cigarette. He could hear the shuffling of a shifting engine in the freight yards on the floor of the valley, coming in close and clear on the moist air, detached, indifferent, the bell in twinkling points, a constellation of sound,—“Utility Major,” Orion’s Belt—

He shaved, took a shower, caught sight of the cigarettes again as he was dressing and lit another; he had never done that before in his life. But he had never done several other things before either, good or bad or foolish.—When he had smoked it halfway he heard the tight little cube of the morning newspaper strike the driveway; as if it had been a signal he thrust the cigarette into an ashtray and walked out into the half-dark. Here, perhaps, it was then, the findings of twenty-two citizens, dispassionate and fair, handed down according to the evidence; citizens not bound by any legal formalities as to what was in their jurisdiction and what wasn’t. The welfare of the city, the health of democracy, that was their jurisdiction, their “bailiwick.” They spoke for the people, they *were* the people;—a little more successful, a little more intelligent, a little better educated than most, maybe, but still the people, born and raised in

Fredericksville, their points of view trimmed and stitched in Fredericksville's schools, ironed and pressed in churches and clubs and leagues and unions—

He opened the paper flat on his desk beside the portable typewriter and turned on the lamp.

ALLIES DENT NAZI LINE BEFORE ROME—

NIP CRUISERS RAIDED AT RABAUL—

THOUSANDS KEEP VIGIL  
AT CANALBANK SHRINE—

GRAND JURY PRESENTS FINDINGS—

He skipped the leading paragraphs with which some *News* reporter had summarized the findings: he wanted to see the jury's exact words, to weigh the exact tone in which they were written. Two or three inches down the column, after a break, he saw the words, "We respectfully submit"; he sat down with his shoulder to the light and folded the paper in quarters. He was going to read every word, pronounce every word—

We respectfully submit herewith the report of the Grand Jury for the October term, 1943. The number of criminal cases presented—

His intention to read every word weakened as he saw the first paragraphs wandering off into salaries of county employees, into a bill to come before the General Assembly, into taxes. He skimmed through them; of course they were important too. The jury had to look into all kinds of things. He supposed he had half expected such matters to come second, but he remembered, as a practical point, that the report had already largely been written when he appeared; it was reasonable enough if the Buden matter should be added at the end. "Having investigated the violation of the liquor laws . . . we note with pride . . . Instances have come to our attention . . . We recommend . . . We sympathize with . . . Numerous incidents—"

Then:

Shortly before the Grand Jury ended its session a request was made by Commissioner Buden that he be allowed to come before our body and present his answer to the charges made against him in the local newspapers. In view of the seriousness . . . felt it our duty . . . and submit herewith the results of our findings, also our recommendations thereon.

He glanced up, reached out toward the package of cigarettes then changed his mind.

We think Mr. Buden was within his rights when he accepted the gift of the city's building on the corner of Clarke and McCall Streets from the mayor. We do not think, however, a good trade was made for the city, since the housewrecker who dismantled the building for Mr. Buden stated to your jury that he would have paid \$200 to \$300 for it. We recommend that in future a more exhaustive effort be made when disposing of city property.

We found that a city truck and city driver on city time made at least eight trips to the Kettle Creek Fishing Club, a total distance of at least 1,150 miles, transporting lumber from the Clarke Street property, building material, convicts and city employees. Such city employees who appeared before us, other than the truck driver, stated that they went there only during their vacations and time-off periods. Mr. Buden stated that he had furnished 30 gallons of gasoline to take care of the gas consumption. Investigation shows that a minimum of 110 gallons was consumed on these trips.

We found at least 15 city convicts from the Stockade were taken to the Kettle Creek camp in the city's truck, some of whom were promised freedom as a reward for volunteering their services to work there. No evidence was presented to show that Mr. Buden requested the use of these convicts. Mr. Buden stated that on other occasions city equipment had been used for the benefit of individual citizens.

We cannot too strongly condemn . . . this practice be discontinued . . . the mayor and City Council . . . only for city business . . .

In regard to the Jack Winn incident—

He reached for the cigarettes, shook one out, stuck it in his lips and left it there unlighted.

In regard to the Jack Winn incident, Mr. Buden has stated in the public prints that he was wrong in ordering the arrest of that gen-

tleman, and there is nothing to prevent Mr. Winn seeking redress in the proper Court of Justice. The other charges were either unsubstantiated with valid evidence or did not come within the scope of our investigation.

Charges that city employees . . .

The Grand Jury deplores the above facts . . . respectfully request all those in authority to conscientiously perform their duties . . . request that copies of these presentments . . . local members of the Legislature . . . newspaper that is now the official gazette . . .

Signed—

He raised his eyes over the edge of the paper and sat for a long minute looking at nothing, not moving. Then he searched down the column, found the six lines of type to which the violation of the rights of a citizen had now evaporated and read them again, syllable by syllable: "Mr. Buden has stated in the public prints that he was wrong in ordering the arrest of that gentleman, and there is nothing to prevent Mr. Winn seeking redress in the proper Court of Justice."

He laid the paper slowly on his desk beside the typewriter and unhooked the earpieces of his spectacles with a familiar roll of his head. He let his hand rest on the arm of the chair, the glasses dangling from his fingers, his eyes gazing out into the blurred room. He felt suddenly cold.

There was no use in wondering if something had gone wrong. No more use than in wondering why a flame in the kindling went out. The flame had gone; that was all that mattered.

After a while he put his glasses on without polishing them, stretched out both hands flat on the chair arms, studying the thin rug beyond his knees, then got deliberately to his feet, strolled into the bedroom, slid his dusty suitcase out from under the bed and started packing. . . .

At eight o'clock, when the variously pitched whistles in the valley began to lift their windblown streamers, he was on his knees beside a wooden box in the lamplight wrapping three books in a page of the morning newspaper. As he laid them in the bottom he saw the words "Grand Jury" on the side of the package and he picked them

up again, unwrapped them, threw the paper under the desk and stacked them in a corner of the box, bare.

When he had tied the string round the shoebox containing the Jackson cards and picked it up to lay it inside, he stopped, held it in his hand for several seconds, gazing toward it with his eyes unfocussed. Then he set it down on the rug beside the pile of books, stood up, walked deliberately to his inside door and climbed the stairs to the telephone. He dialled "110," listening to the mechanical buzz with one ear while his other almost unconsciously heard the steady hiss from the kitchen where the cook would be frying the tomatoes they would have for wartime breakfast instead of bacon—

"Long Distance?"

"I want to put in a call to Dayton, Ohio."

"All right, sir."

"Mrs. Allen Estes." He spelled it in as cool a tone as he could manage. "She's at the residence of Mr. Karl Bohlender, R.F.D. 4."

"Hold the line, please."

And with a series of sorting clicks and signal-tones he heard the voices begin feeling their way toward her: "Atlanta . . . one moment, please . . . Hello, Chattanooga, give me Cincinnati . . . one moment, please . . . thank you . . . Cincinnati—" the girl-voices growing sharper, quicker, blonder,—out into the North and West, Congress-born not King—

It suddenly occurred to him it was only seven o'clock in Ohio. Even if the Bohlender household were stirring, seven o'clock in the morning was hardly time for, "Look here, you can't do this to me because I love you!"—everybody there certainly up until two and probably later, with the wartime trains all behind schedule, and the drive out into the country—

"This is Dayton . . . information . . . one moment, please . . . Fredericksville calling Mr. Karl . . . thank you . . . Hello, Fredericksville; honeychile, I have a Mr. Karl Bohlender on Germantown Road. Could that . . . Hello, sir; could . . . one moment, please . . . your number is Wyandot-3035—" like a ripple bouncing back at last from the far shore, all glittering with particles of Ohio and

Ohio's childhood, Wyandot to Cherokee, washing back into the solid smells of a Georgia breakfast—

Four rings on Wyandot-3035, then, "Hello," in the plodding, early-morning voice of a heavy man of about sixty who had been up for some time.

"Fredericksville, Georgia, is calling Mrs. Allen Estes."

The voice said something he couldn't catch, then the circuit went suddenly flat and he heard nothing except a sort of vast clarity until the operator said, her words as clean of feeling as chromium, "Mrs. Allen Estes, sir, is not at home. Shall I—"

"Not at home!—When do they expect her?"

"They expect her later today or tonight. Shall I have her call?"

She wouldn't call him; there was no use in leaving such a message. "Just cancel it, please," putting the phone down slowly, reluctantly, as if there were some happiness to be had in merely being connected with Ohio.

He turned away, bewildered. Where was she? Of course there were plenty of explanations; a train could easily be six or seven hours late today,—waiting on interminable sidings for the war-trains, troop-trains one way, hospital-trains the other; or she might have stopped over in Atlanta and taken the night train. Whatever the explanation; it could have the sound assumption she was quite able to take care of herself. Call again at dinnertime, when he got back from school; call at the long recess—

Was he going to school then? He had almost forgotten things were different now. Why go near the school? What was the use in that? He didn't want to talk about it with anyone; finish packing, go his way—

He stood up and went downstairs. Perched on the edge of his chair, he slipped a piece of white paper into the typewriter and wrote the words he had almost written last night: Please accept my resignation from the faculty of Frederick Academy effective this date. There was no use to give reasons; the Board would understand all right.

As he signed his name he remembered he had packed away all the

contents of his stamp drawer in one of the boxes; never mind. He could get one from the drugstore, get one from Miss Saggus. He would go to the school as usual; wind up the week. It was better to do it that way. He might talk to Crumbley, hand him the resignation; no, mail it direct to the superintendent.—He addressed the envelope, sealed it, put it in his coat pocket.

In the meantime there were many things to be attended to. He would have to call Mr. Dobit; he would have to talk to Mrs. D'Antel about subletting the apartment for the rest of the month. Leave her a forwarding address—

He put another sheet of paper in the typewriter and wrote, "George Cliatt, c/o Wrightsboro High School, Wrights—" He stopped and stared at his still fingers on the keys.

Was there any possible way in which all this might yet be avoided? Had everything really failed? Did he really even think everything had failed? Wasn't he honestly quite aware the final word had not been spoken, the ultimate power not really even appealed to?

True, their interest had died away after the first day or so but that was when they had been, more or less, spectators; the question had never been laid directly before them. No one had ever actually appeared before them, as he had appeared before the jury; ever called on them to say Yes or No, whether the slate should be wiped clean. The jury had spoken, the "interests" had spoken, the immediate victim had spoken; but the people hadn't spoken, the ultimate victim hadn't spoken. If they spoke and agreed with the others, why, all right; that was the end; he would be satisfied. But would he ever be satisfied with this decision if it hadn't come from the highest authority? Wouldn't he always feel that, in this final court, it might have been reversed? Would he ever be at peace with himself, remembering he might have taken it to the people and had not? Thousands Keep Vigil at Canalbank Shrine. Wasn't it worth one further try? Lay it before them. Are you content to have it this way, men and women of Fredericksburg?

All right; suppose they were not. Then what? Lead them in a

mass parade on their City Hall? Of course not. But there was a right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. If you are not content to have it this way, then come forward now and sign your names to this protest, this petition, and I will take it before your City Council for you—

Oh, nonsense! It was unthinkable. He wouldn't do it. He had done enough; he had done everything a man could be expected to do. Let it end here.

He got up, stuffed the forwarding address in his pocket and ran upstairs to the dining room. Ten minutes later, he closed the flap of his briefcase, threw his raincoat over his arm, clapped his old felt hat on his head and set out down the hill—as he had done thousands of times before; though never a one as alone as this, as flat, as silhouetted against a blank tomorrow.—If she had taken the night train she was looking out of the windows at Central Kentucky now, seeing—either Georgia or Ohio—



THE TRAIN SEEMED to her to move from little station to little station in lackadaisical jumps as if the last thing in life that mattered was to arrive anywhere,—pulling itself indifferently out of the cloud of women-children chatter like a heavy man walking out in the midst of a party. “When we were at Benning . . . a major, yes . . . the PX had plenty,” their brushed-up golden hair, some of it darker at the roots or pinker, different from her own falling about her shoulders so that she had had to slip the long-distance telephone receiver under it; “maneuvers up in Carolina somewhere . . . not a box of kleenex in the whole town,” the iron hum of the wheels closing over the shrill variety of voices and accents like an implacable parent fitting the top back on a box of peppermints, rising up an increasingly steep slope of speed, screaming in a long, bowing, bending, self-confident whistle as if in triumph at reaching the crest, and then almost at once beginning to slow down again as though the ridge

were hardly wide enough to stand on, slower and slower, quieter and quieter, until at last, with a sudden shake of the seat, a sigh and a profound motionless, they were back again into the purring chatter: "Living on the post . . . the South . . . my landlady . . . the South's a funny place, they never eat catsup on their French fries—"

"Mama, who tells it when to stop?"

She leaned over and brushed her hand over his hair. "When it starts you hold on to the sides of the seats, tight, see?"

"Like Herman held tight."

"Yes, like Herman."

"Mama, do you remember Herman Being?"

"Oh, yes, I remember."

"Why couldn't Herman come too?"

"You go see that little girl up there—"

She looked out the window past the ordnance insignia of a stout lieutenant colonel reading a long-sheeted mimeograph he had taken out of a briefcase but not too absorbed in munitions to let the corners of his eyes glance down now and then at her knees; you could feel a man's eyes on your knees as easily as if he had touched them. It wouldn't be long now before he would ask her where she was going—

Where *was* she going? Well, she was going somewhere, anyhow; she wasn't merely leaving some other where. It would be different this time because she was different; it was as if her decision to break with him—which had hardly been a decision at all but a sort of galvanic reaction to the ticket agent's "Last berth on the train, lady," when she had meant only to inquire and decide later—had somehow got misdirected and broken the wrong bonds. For all through the long shaking night, following after the swaying willowy whistle that kept taking her back to the front seat of his old car and their hands locked between them, Jeff beside her in a deep obliterating sleep, she seemed to be leaving behind her more of her own past than of George; and the more she tried to turn her thoughts into the positive future of tomorrow and home, the tighter the bond to him seemed to become. Instead of breaking at last with the stretching

miles it seemed to pull more and more firmly into place, until, in her half-sleep, the train seemed to be getting nowhere at all but to be rocking and bouncing and singing in a great enthusiasm all the while lashed firmly to Fredericksville,—or to his part of Fredericksville; while the other part, her husband's mother and father, his childhood, his bedroom, her memories of him, dissolved away, for better or worse, into the haze of Southern rain.

They had been nice about her leaving so abruptly; a little resentful at losing Jeff who, they seemed to feel, belonged more to them than to anyone else, but kind about it too, at heart perhaps relieved at finding her repulsing a successor to their son. Telegram from father,—she could lie pretty glibly if she put her mind to it. Oh, I'm used to moving at short notice—

Then, in the Atlanta station, climbing the gloomy black stairs and wondering if maybe the old man couldn't have done something, couldn't still do something if he knew about it, and getting change at a newsstand and putting in the call, wanting to tell him, possibly also unable to resist a sort of last look-back. And the old man's voice saying in its dry way, "It had better be a train to Fredericksville, Miss," and leaving her speechless, her throat suddenly full, staring mistily at the oily telephone, Jeff on tiptoe beyond the door, his nose mashed against the glass. Sitting beside him at a wet counter, absent-mindedly stirring a thick white cup of coffee: "Why don't you say something?" and putting her arm round him as if to cling to him while a red-headed corporal pinched another paper napkin out of the holder and handed it to her for the one she had dropped on the floor. Listening almost in terror to an inhuman voice from a loudspeaker in a corner: "Train Number Four—Chattanooga—Danville—Lexington—Cincinnati—"

Then on the train again, smoother now; quieter, the turmoil all inside her, stretching the band that wouldn't snap, her thoughts turning more and more behind her to him as the one pillar of reality. For all the absurdity of his romantic dream, didn't it, in another way, contain much more of "reality" than the wishful, day-to-day musings of the "realists"?—her mind growing clearer, like the plung-

ing morning beyond the windows with the sun coming out of the southeast behind her shredding the damp into ribbons. And then at last, staring at the dark train shed of Chattanooga and suddenly grabbing Jeff's hand and ringing for the porter—

"I take it," said the lieutenant colonel with a sagacious smile, "you are going to Fredericksville to join your husband who is stationed there."

She lifted her eyes, gazed for a moment up the swaying aisle, her lips beginning to quiver in spite of herself. "Yes, I am."

"He's at Camp Clarke?"

"Well," she caught herself smiling grimly, "he expects to be transferred soon."

Going to join her husband in Fredericksville! Suppose he could have heard that! Suppose the Great Power had heard that,—from whom all disappointments flow. Maybe things in Fredericksville were not as she hoped; hoping accomplished nothing. Maybe he was changed by what she had done. Maybe the break was not one to be healed. What then? Another train journey? Worse even than this had been? Back through this landscape for the last time?

What did she expect? No matter. "Expect" was intellectual. She wasn't interested in reasoning about it; she was going back. Not to make him marry her; not exactly. That is, not by any force he would recognize. Tell him—what would she tell him? Well, there was nothing she *could* tell him, was there? If there should be a moment in which he seemed to expect her to tell him why she had returned, everything would be lost. He would have to know why, at the very sight of her. There would be nothing to say but, "Allen!" Nothing to feel but his arms round her. She didn't care where he would be living, how much money he made, what his occupation was. If he lost his job, and he surely would, that didn't matter at all; it would matter to him but she could change that—

"Mama."

She took him on her lap. "You're getting tired of our little train trip, aren't you?" She kissed his hair.

"Where're we going this time?"

"Do you remember George?"

"Herman's George?"

"Yes. Do you remember him?"

He curled his wrists over his chest and laughed, "Who, me?"

"Come on; we'll go wash our face and hands. That'll make us get there quicker." She set him down and guided him ahead of her up the aisle by touches on his shoulders.—Suppose he didn't want to marry a woman with another man's child—

"Box lunch for mother and the little man?" A middle-aged woman in olive-green overalls smiled at them over an armful of pasteboard boxes, standing aside to let them pass. "No diner on the train, ma'am."

"Oh, a picnic train!" he said.

She felt as if eating were a physical impossibility but she bought a box and they ate some of the chicken, sitting beside the lieutenant colonel who, in his hopelessness, had now become quite domesticated and fatherly. He took Jeff between his knees and peeled an apple for him in one slow-growing, interminable, red-and-yellow curl—

But just precisely how would it be? Where would she find him? Just exactly what was she going to do, when she had completed the circuit and stood once more in Fredericksburg? She would telephone Jane; that was the first thing she would do. After she had had a bath and put Jeff to bed,—then what? Telephone him? Or walk down the hill and knock on his door?

She drew in a deep breath; it might not be so simple after all. Maybe she shouldn't have turned back. It was beginning to look more and more foolish. Many, many things could go wrong. Things always went wrong. The only thing you could be absolutely sure of was that things wouldn't be as you expected; perhaps if she expected them to go wrong it might help—

"The next stop," chanted the porter, "is Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg," with something of the contented finality of Bach who, after inconceivable adventures and vicissitudes, circled at last for his inevitable happy landing.

It was nearly three by the waiting-room clock when she heard Jane's voice soar from a perfunctory "Hello" to "Darling!" She shared a supremely soiled taxicab with two polite young soldiers, who unabashedly studied her breasts and legs while chatting with considerable country charm to Jeff sitting sleepily on her lap. At Jane's house one of them took her suitcases up the walk for her. "What're you doing tonight, baby?"

"I'm afraid I'm busy, thank you."

He set the suitcases down at the top of the steps, patted Jeff on the head, tipped his cap and went back to the cab. . . .

She was looking over her shoulder into a mirror at the seams of her last precious pair of good stockings when she heard the well-known bell at the Arsenal strike four. She turned away and sat down on the foot of the bed; after all it was pretty humiliating to go throw yourself at a man like this. If she waited round quietly for a few days she would probably run into him; or she could manage to get a message to him one way or another, through Jane, through the old man. Telephone Mr. Dobit on some excuse or other; let George learn of it that way. Call it wile or guile or craft or cunning, the end was what mattered; besides, it was no wilier or guilier than skinning into your best stockings—

She glanced at Jeff sleeping soundly on his back with his fists doubled up beside his ears. The house was quiet; Jane had walked the children out in the yard—with great determination. A "few days," though, would mean inevitable complications with Mother Estes. Telephone him then! At least that would be less blatant than knocking on his door with a *Here I am, what are you going to do about it?* He might be thinking about something else; he might not have been nearly as upset about it as Jane believed—

She lit a cigarette, hung a raincoat about her shoulders though the air was cooler and seemed to be clearing and walked down the leaf-matted path to the street. At the sidewalk she flipped the cigarette away.

It seemed to her she reached his boardinghouse in less than five minutes, though she waited on the corner of Oglethorpe through

an extra green light and stopped at the drugstore window to count the bottles of "liquid stockings." She strolled past Mrs. D'Antel's columns, past the cement incline of the driveway, glancing down it, half hoping to see him in the backyard, half hoping she wouldn't. Suppose she went to Mrs. D'Antel's front door, rang, told the maid to ask if Mr. Cliatt would see Mrs. Estes, Mrs. Allen Estes; that would be a good deal better than just knocking on his door with a *Here I am*—

She turned about and walked back, not swiftly but purposefully. At the driveway she left the sidewalk, looking neither to right nor left, chin up, her face as impassive as she could make it; she might be merely one of his "parents" coming by to talk over Jimmie's grades. Suppose he was already talking to a parent; parents probably came to see him all the time, the younger ones,—in their brightest lipstick,—Jimmie this and Johnny that, crossing their damned liquid stockings—

She stepped up to his narrow balcony, made her way along it through a resistance rapidly becoming impenetrable and at last reached the door. Sweeping aside all further thinking, she rapped on the glass with the back of her fingernail. The sound seemed at once clandestine and timid and she knocked three times with her knuckles. Then she moved hurriedly back from the door against the iron rail, clutched it for a second, and then turned about and gazed off through the symmetrical cone of the poplar tree, bare from the stripping rains, the haze beyond it beginning to tear into scraps. It was too late to run away; the knob would turn at any instant now, —beheading every thought, stabbing every doubt, washing away all her images of how it was going to be—

Unless she had knocked too lightly after all.—Unless he wasn't there. He wasn't there! That was the truth; it must be. That was the one contingency she hadn't thought of—

Inexpressibly disappointed at the very possibility and yet also inexpressibly relieved his absence would defer an answer she was afraid of, she stepped up to the door and knocked once more, holding her hand close to the glass and ready to knock again. Hearing

no move, her disappointment swept her relief aside; she would have to go back up the hill to Jane's, wait with a pretense of indifference, suspended in doubt's thin air, talk casually of this and that, work her way through all this another time. She knocked firmly and when there was no sound inside, without thinking of what she was doing beyond a sort of instinctive feeling she would be nearer him by being at any rate in the midst of his possessions, opened the door, peered into the dimness, walked in.

Her first thoughts burst upon her almost in a panic. A suitcase on the desk, a small trunk by the chair, boxes packed, shelves empty! He was gone; he was not merely "away," but gone. He had moved. And she had lost him—

Then as her eyes became quieter she realized the tops hadn't been nailed on the boxes, the suitcase wasn't strapped. Undoubtedly he was coming back. He might simply have gone upstairs. He would certainly return; and maybe at any moment. She would wait right there, in the faint honest smell of tobacco and books and pine boxes and lightwood splinters, until he came,—pulled himself up gasping in the doorway at the sight of a ghost.

She crossed to the door she had left open and started to shut it. Then, looking out, she saw in the yard below the tin roof of the sheds and the faded cornice bearing the names of the boarders with cars: "Strozier," "Dieudonne," "Cliatt." His compartment was empty.

Well, after all, that meant nothing necessarily; he had gone out to attend to some last-minute details before—he went away. Where in the world was he going? Why was he moving? What had happened? Something had gone wrong—

She went out on the balcony, searched right and left, saw nobody to ask, walked uncertainly up the driveway and cut across a plot of newly planted winter grass to the front door. When the maid answered her ring she asked if she might see Mrs. D'Antel. The maid led her into a small empty sitting room overly full of wicker chairs and sofas and in a few minutes she was shaking the strong hand of

an elderly pale woman in nose glasses, their fine gold chain hooked over her right ear.

"I think I saw him drive out about ten or fifteen minutes ago—"

"You don't know where he went?"

"I really couldn't say—"

"I—I'm very anxious to find him."

"He's leaving, you know—"

"But you think he has gone!"

Mrs. D'Antel smiled. "He'd better not go without telling me good-by." She gave Allen a penetrating glance, then went on. "He's going to Wrightsboro, you know? That is, he expects to; he said he would know definitely by the middle of the afternoon. I have a young captain and his wife over there in the parlor now, waiting to know if they can have the apartment on Monday. The war's made Fredericksburg so terribly crowded—"

"I've got to find him somehow."

"You're welcome to sit here and wait a while—"

"Oh, I can't do that. I've got to find him right away."

"Well,—I hardly know what to suggest. You might call the Academy—"

"May I use your telephone?"

"Certainly, honey—"

She called the Academy; Mr. Cliatt had left there a little after two. Then she called Mr. Dobit at home; he was not there but when she rang the school his cheerful, unyearning voice answered. He told her he had been waiting there at the phone expecting to hear from George any minute. "There's an opening in Wrightsboro but doggone the rascal, I've got to let 'em know something. If you see him first, tell him for heaven's sake—say, are you in Atlanta?"

"I'm at the boardinghouse."

"Good! If he calls me I'll tell him to ring you—"

They hung up and she sat there thinking of all the questions she could have asked him, questions that might have suggested in their answers where he was, what had happened—

Oh, didn't she know well enough what had happened! Precisely

what she had warned him against. It was only the details she didn't know; she knew the pattern.—If only he had been a little more skeptical, just a little cynical, it might be different now,—except it might be for his very want of cynicism she loved him, for the very blindness with which he overcame the most paralyzing fear of all, the fear of making a fool of yourself—

She knew what had happened, beginning ages ago with the Winn incident, the "Winn affair"—

He might have gone to see Winn, Winn What's-his-name? Jack Winn! Mac and Jack!

She fumbled through the curled pages of the telephone book, found the number and dialled it. She could hear it begin to ring: one—two—three—four—five. Was it possible there could be nobody at the filling station?

At the thought she felt like lowering her face into her hands.—Let it ring! Six—seven—eight—

She realized all of a sudden she was staring at the ad of a taxicab company on the cover of the telephone book. She broke the connection in the midst of a ring, waited an instant, then called the company and ordered a taxicab. "As quick as possible, please! I'm in a hurry—"



BRUCE WAS GLAD it was too dark for the men to see his face as the realization struck him the shots could be nothing else than a signal from Cruger. He felt like lowering his head into his cold hands, like letting go of all his muscles and crumpling up slack into the broomsedge. What possible hope did they have now? Courage they had, those who had stayed; but courage was no replacement for the rifles and muskets that had left them—

He heard a burst of firing, this time clearly from down the river. There, at any rate, was an answer to one of his questions; Cruger was not going to try a crossing directly behind them. He was going below to the shallows in front of the town; he was handing them,

maybe, two hours,—in exchange for the certainty of getting there. The firing was probably from McCall and his handful at the fort; they might already have sighted Cruger's advance party approaching the shore—

He thought of Colonel Clarke in the woods they had left, listening to the firing, decoding it in probably the same terms as himself, after all these years together,—decoding it into as many new questions as answers. Cruger was crossing below; how long could McCall hold him off? An hour? As much as three? He would be doing well to delay him at all, with the one platoon he had, with the force Cruger had undoubtedly sent. Would there be time to assault the house, at once, in the dark, in the midst of the distracting joy? Time to take it and turn back to save McCall? Or did they dare detach one of their own platoons immediately and send it down to the fort? One more platoon at the fort wouldn't hold it,—and one less there before the house would certainly mean failure.

It was perfectly clear to him they must either abandon the house and bring McCall everything they had or abandon the fort and fight it out from their present positions. Trying to save the house with one hand and the fort with the other, they would surely lose both,—and with them, the valley, the campaign, the whole summer's work, all the agony of this bold stab into His Arrogant Lordship's side—

He knew the old man well by now but he had no guess as to what he would decide; he couldn't say what he himself would have decided. And was there really any choice? Weren't they going to lose both, no matter what they decided? Wasn't the choice only as to which they would lose first,—whether it was better to die in a field or in a stockade?

He glanced off to the east of the clearing where the bristling crests of the pines were beginning to emerge from the sky. And he noticed now he could see the chimney tops on the house. He could almost trace the dark outline of Coffey's figure squatting in the weeds. In a lull of the distant firing he could hear some of the men on each side of him beginning to be restless, as if they had begun to think what he was trying not to think,—that what happened to

liberty, to the war, the campaign or the battle was of no importance at all compared to the fact that they were crouching there in an open field directly under the sights of an appalling number of British muskets, and day was beginning to break.

Then he heard a man asking his way in a whisper to "the major" and he listened to the order from Colonel Clarke to prepare to attack the house. He passed the order along, not thinking whether it was wise or foolish, not certain, even, whether it was an old order set in motion before the firing began or whether it was Clarke's new decision, not questioning it, glad, at any rate, they would not be huddled there when day came.

Then, while the hit-or-miss firing from down the river continued nervously to grow, he heard another voice murmuring his name and a messenger brought him the order to retire; the boy pronounced, with no more intonation than if he had been counting chickens, "Form in the woods and proceed with all haste to support McCall."

And he accepted this dully, as he had accepted the other. He passed the word along to withdraw and sent Coffey toward the farther side of the field to see they came out in an orderly manner. The line of his men reversed itself as easily as a tired climber turns about to walk downhill, and he crouched there watching the still-vague shadows as they moved past him, enumerating them absent-mindedly and, he knew, uselessly, for they would be glad enough to be leaving.

Once a man off to his right hopped up out of the weeds and ran breakneck down the slope and he watched the silhouette, shocked and depressed at the confession of it, in a quiet terror at knowing too well the instinct that had impelled the man, the uneasy sensation that had been growing in him beginning now to reveal itself,—the sensation of hanging on to a rope with all your strength and feeling it begin to slip through your fingers. He wanted to stand up and run into the woods too.

But he continued to squat there on his wet knees, speaking in a low voice to the men crawling past, not sure whether it was better to be reassuring or stern and hearing his tone change under the

tension from one to the other and back again, his breathing heavy as if the turn toward courage lay this time at the top of a forbidden mountain but hoping still that somehow the hidden man within him, upon whom this task seemed now all to have fallen, would put out his hand and save him,—not necessarily from dying, though from that too if possible, but from failing in his own eyes and in the eyes of the others—

“Keep on your knees. Easy now.”

“Whar we going to, Major?”

“Form in the woods. Follow your man ahead.”

Here was the perilous moment of unbalance, the moment of stepping backward out of the radius of the snake; if Browne in the house knew what was happening, or suspected it might be happening,—even acted on a hope—

He looked up the hill behind him through the tops of the weeds. The light was strong enough now to reveal the vague line of the fortifications against the paling gray of the house. He watched it with a hollow tenseness, aware now that at some recent moment the house had become quiet. The cheers and shouts were still, even the unreasoned wail of the wounded man. There was no firing, no sound of movement, and he found himself all of a sudden wondering if it were possible they could have abandoned the house.

Then, gazing at the dark ridge of the breastworks, he had an uncertain feeling the top of it had moved, and he kept staring at it in the veiled light, conscious that the harder he stared the more difficult it was to separate what he saw from what he thought he saw. He thought he saw the silhouette lift slightly then subside,—wondering too if that wasn’t exactly the sort of trick his eyes might play on him, straining in the feeble light. He turned away to the line of men that had halted for a second beside him; he had an impulse to touch the nearest man on the shoulder and tell him to look at the top of the mounds, ask him if he saw anything.

When he looked back at the mounds himself he knew at once what is was. He saw nothing he hadn’t seen before, but all at once he knew,—as all at once, with slate before him and crayon in his

mouth, a boy knew a demonstration in Euclid. The Indians were dragging themselves over the parapet into the field.

The simple fact started revolving in his mind, slowly then rapidly, expanding and contracting, until in a minute it hardly meant anything any more as an actual fact but merely as a new background against which he would have to make a new decision: halt the men where they were and maybe give them time to brace themselves,—or hurry the retirement into the woods where a defense would be more practical. And maybe receive the onslaught as they retired! And he crouched there, deciding nothing, watching the dark forms slither over the breastworks, like a rabbit hypnotized by the dry ringing of a rattlesnake.

Then he heard Coffey's voice beside him and he began speaking in a low tone, conscious he was talking fast, "Get through to Captain Willis in the woods. Tell him he's going to be attacked. Hurry the men along. I'm waiting here for the rest of the line."

"I don't think you ought to stay here, Mr. Bruce."

Bruce answered him impatiently, told him to go ahead.

And he waited there in the broomsedge, pushing the men on as they crawled up, not wondering what it was he might be going to die for, not thinking about anything further into the future than the next minute or two,—waiting there, not for the cause of independence or liberty or freedom, or for patriotism, or for any cause, but for himself, because it was easier for him to think of dying than of the look in the men's eyes if they had lost faith in him—

He had his hand on a man's damp back, urging him past, when in the unnatural quiet beneath the far-off shots down the river, he heard the cheery whistle of a partridge. And he was a boy again, in the forests back of New Inverness, watching the little white-flecked, egg-plump, stub-tailed creature cocking its bill toward the tops of the Georgia grass. He stopped the man crawling by. "Here it comes—"

And the broomsedge lifted up into a swarm of screeching, stinking bodies, sprouting arms and clubs against the daybreak and the dim roof of the house, tossing like the branches of some bare, fan-

tastic forest whipped in a tempest. He fired his one ball with half an aim, clubbed the hot barrel in his fists, struck out at the front of a shaved skull, saw the gleam of a wet hatchet blade, and crashed into the end of the world—



GEORGE HAD TO wait for a break in the traffic before he could turn into Broad Street. This surprised him; still it was not unprecedented and he gave it only a passing thought. His mind was on other things,—quietly on them, for he had reached his decision; the alternatives now were merely in the details of carrying it out. He swung into the street at the first chance, without any hurry yet with his jaw unmistakably set.

By the time he had gone far enough to see the earth-colored roof of the White House on the knoll, swelling up above its neighbors in the manner of an old-fashioned balloon ascension at a county fair, the cars ahead of him had begun to creep and there was not a parking space left at either curb. There were all kinds of cars, muddy and shiny, short and long, old and relatively new. The licenses were mostly Georgia and South Carolina but he could see many of foreign shape and color, licenses of Fredericksville's wartime population: Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, Oklahoma. In the side streets and along the edge of the field there were horses and mules, wagons and bicycles. Below the White House a policeman in khaki standing by his motorcycle held George up with the palm of his hand while a group of men and women crossed the street impatiently and hurried off along the dirt road.

George gazed after them. The crowd was several times greater than yesterday, filling one corner of the field and rising up the side of the canalbank like an arrested surf; along the top of the bank, against the mills and the old powder-works chimney and the colorless sky, the dark figures of men, women and children stood and moved about. In one place he could see the network of an iron bed

and when he looked closer he made out parts of two or three cots and a few pale shafts of crutches and sticks—

The policeman whistled an ear-splitting blast through his teeth: “Don’t you see me telling you come on!”

He drove past him under an ironclad stare and continued down the street beyond the filling station until he found a truck pulling away from the curb. He worked his car into the space, locked it and, walking back along the sidewalk, cut across the concrete apron of the station and came out into the road. Ahead of him he heard a woman saying, “That boy stood the livelong day in the rain and he never got wet.”

“A miracle itself—”

He paused a moment beside the road that had been pressed into a thin mud by the going and coming of many feet; words and fragments of words came to him from the people hastening by,—“vision . . . threw down her crutches and got up . . . the clouds opened . . . revelation of a . . . saw a face with wings right over the old chimney—”

He went on, picking his way about the puddles. As he came into the outskirts of the crowd the core of it sent a hymn washing outward in great rings:

“From ev’ry stormy wind that blows,  
From ev’ry swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat—”

He worked his way forward between shoulders and arms. There is a calm, a sure retreat. They had to be taught to do something more than seek a calm, a sure retreat, than just sit back and accept handouts: if the news was good, Thank the Lord! if it was bad, Let us pray! Teaching them, though, got back to one man’s brain; maybe our job had better be to teach the individual, teach him honesty, responsibility,—teach him integrity.—But never mind that now—

He was tall enough to see the top of a small wooden shrine built near the base of the canalbank. At the front of the platform before

it a thick-chested man was facing the crowd and directing the singing with fingers outstretched at the rim of large encompassing gestures; behind the song-leader, an unconsulted hymnal open in his two hands, George recognized the Reverend Sampey McCall, his mouth wide with the singing, his neck muscles distended as if he were resolved to set a pattern of extracting from the words every tiny morsel of meaning.

In a pause between the stanzas George heard a woman behind him feverently murmur, "Oh, I hope something wonderful is going to happen." How much will you *do*, madam, to make something wonderful happen? Of course he wasn't going to say any such thing. As he started to move on he heard a man's voice trying to restrain her expectations with the warning the boy didn't pray but a minute or two. The woman insisted, "They say this morning old Miss Peake would have gone if he hadn't laid his hands on her." "She just fainted." "You'll go down yonder for that kind of talk!"

By the time the hymn had reached the last stanza George had slipped and slithered his way far enough into the throng to see the upper edge of a canvas partition enclosing a circular space beside the platform. As the hymn drew toward its close Mr. McCall folded the book under his arm and, without in any detail diminishing the relish of his singing, slowly descended the two or three steps at one side of the stage and in a moment mounted them again with the same measured tread, his other arm about the narrow shoulders of Doodye loose inside a dark-green tent of sweater. The song-leader transported himself deferentially away from the center as if on three or four beats of his wings and Mr. McCall, his great white hand looking strangely heavy on the spare trellis of the boy's shoulder bones, guided Doodye to the front of the stage. Mr. McCall was singing lustily into the treetops but Doodye sang hardly at all, moving his lips slightly and gazing about into the upturned faces immediately below him, a faint half-confused smile coming into his eyes now and then as if he saw a head he knew.

At the end of the hymn Mr. McCall stepped backward and left him alone. A vast silence seemed to swell out of the crowd, as

palpable, in reverse, as the hymn. Doodye, small in the powerful focus of their stares, shut his eyes as tight as if somebody had promised to put a piece of candy in his mouth.

For a long increasingly uncomfortable moment nothing happened and George felt as if somebody ought to end the child's torture, send him back to his arithmetic. Then, as though rising safely at last out of a deep plunge, Doodye stretched his arms above him, lifted his chin until his face was directed almost straight overhead and cried in a shrill slow voice that seemed to send a ripple through the crowd, "Our Father,—Who art in heaven—"

A blended grumble of voices caught up the words as if on an electric contact; all through George's neck and shoulders a tingle throbbed, receded, throbbed again. Doodye himself seemed to feel the transfusion pouring back to him, for a band of color burrowed into his pallor and he raised his shred of a body an inch or two on the toes of his wrinkled shoes. The "Amen!" broke from the crowd like an ocean roller smashing on the shore.

Doodye opened his eyes, a new person. He cried, in a tone that sounded almost angry under the shock of imparted assurance, "All hail the power of Jesus' name—Let angels prostrate fall—Bring forth the royal diadem—And crown Him Lord of all.—Everybody!"

The song-leader moved a step forward, swung his arms up, down, then up, and the hymn soared aloft as if he had tossed it into the air. Immediately he began retiring to the rear again, as you might hand the pole to a woman after making sure the trout was on the line, the dimensions of his deep-welled baritone stretching his mouth into august circles and ovals.

George threaded his way past a gaunt old man with a crippled child of seven or eight in his arms, brushing the wet end of the girl's sawed-off crutch, turning to apologize and finding both of them singing obliviously, their rapt and troubled gaze on Doodye's face; a small baby stared at him through a grime of tears, resting its pointed chin in the hollow of a woman's shoulder. When he reached a corner of the platform beside the steps his glasses had become misty with the humid heat of the bottom land and the

crowd; he took them off and wiped them with the end of his necktie,—wiped them again and again while his determination seemed to pause, look round at him in a query.

Wasn't it hopeless? Wasn't it beyond the bounds of possibility to redirect their great might? Hadn't he better get back to his suit-cases and his boxes? If the people had once been concerned about what had happened to Winn, they were no longer. People got troubles enough of their own, P'fessor. Give it up. When hope of succeeding ended, a man became simply a fool to persevere further. Sometimes men had won on account of the very fact they hadn't known when they were defeated, but more often they had probably held on only to turn a simple defeat into disaster. He could abandon it now with a clear conscience; the end was easy to see. If he hadn't come among them he might always have thought a bold and direct appeal to them would have saved it all, but now he knew better; you could look into their lonely faces and know they wouldn't understand a hope that sprang from anything short of the world beyond.—But might that not be because they had a leader to guide them into that world and none to explain this one? If he explained the incident, what it meant to them, might there not be one chance in a thousand they would understand? Yesterday, this morning, an hour ago, he had said emphatically Yes. Now,—but anyhow, he would have gone all the way. He would have drawn the arrow to the very shank of the point—

The last line of the hymn died away and Doodye lifted his arm again and, without a moment's hesitation, began in a voice that was almost a scream to George standing now so near, "I believe in God, the Father—" And the thronged voices took it up, pronouncing the short phrases after him like a fabulous echo rebounding a thousand-fold. George saw that the man with the crippled girl had moved forward to the front of the stage at Doodye's feet, his arm propping the weight of the child against the boards. Doodye seemed not to see them, his thoughts obviously on following the words. But after the last phrase and the shattering "Amen!" George saw Doodye look downward, hesitate an instant, then stoop impulsively forward.

There was a sudden murmur of people moving, leaning, rising on their toes, and Doodye laid both hands on the child's head. A light broke into her face and into the man's and Doodye moved one hand to stroke the girl's dank hair in a sort of stumbling love.

The weatherbeaten crutch slipped out of her fingers and dropped on the stamped grass.

"Set her down, brother!"

"She's healed, brother!"

The song-leader, with an incongruous mundanity, sprang off the end of the platform, brushed roughly past George, shoved his way to the side of the old man as if to hustle him off; but Doodye stopped him by an imperious point of his finger, and the old man kneeled first on one leg, then on both, then lowered the girl with an infinite gentleness to the ground. For a tentative moment he held her there, both arms tightly round her, studying her face. Then he loosened his grip and removed his hands a few inches, and for an instant she stood there in a sort of tenacious triumph, the song-leader motionless beside her, the crowd frozen in the midst of a breath. Then she crumpled quietly into a sickening pile of legs and arms.

A woman on the inner circle shrieked as if she had been stabbed, but the song-leader snatched the girl up with a bold ecstasy, freeing an arm and raising it, his eyes squinted shut, and shouted, "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!" until George almost began to doubt what he had seen.

"Almighty God," pronounced the great voice of Mr. McCall at the front of the stage; "from whom all blessings flow—"

George felt the crowd begin at once to quiet.

"From whom cometh every good and perfect gift—"

He looked up at the black tower of the preacher, then bowed his head with the others. When the prayer ended and he raised his eyes, the song-leader, the child and the old man had vanished.

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," Mr. McCall added, his arms outstretched like radio antennae, "and I will give you rest." He lowered his hands in a period. Then he said in flat

prose, abandoning the long tonal swells, "During the hymn to follow, come forward and gather with us, in these simple canvas walls, beside the tree of life, while this blessed boy intercedes for the afflicted. Come forward now, singing that grand old hymn, 'My faith looks up to Thee—Thou Lamb of Calvary—Savior Divine—Now hear me while I pray—Take all my sin away—O let me from this day—Be wholly Thine.'—Everybody!"

Mr. McCall passed the leading of the hymn to Doodye and, as the crowd moved obediently forward under its expression of earnest tension and began to gather about the opening of the enclosure, he descended the steps, his left knee folding under him more quickly than his right. At the bottom he was standing so close George could see the dandruff on the collar of his dark-blue coat. There seemed to be no more evidence the people were to be trusted than God was, but still there seemed to be about as much; what else was a man to believe in than the people? Unless it was himself. And could he believe in himself if—

He touched Mr. McCall on the arm. The preacher turned round wearily. "You kindly gave me a lift into town the other day."

Mr. McCall seemed to fumble in a deep pocket for his recognition of George and to be not very happy with it when he found it. "You've come to the Lord," he said, an incipient skepticism forming in his eyes. "How's your soul today?"

"I've got to talk to you for just a minute."

Mr. McCall forgivably tilted his large head and presented a fuzzy ear, gazing off at the hymn rising voluminously out of the open mouths before him.

"You've read about the arrest of this boy, Jack Winn."

Mr. McCall shook his head and waited.

"Well," George said, somewhat abashed, "this boy was arrested here for no just cause; without a warrant. These men and women ought to know about it. Because it's in their power—"

"Brother—"

"I want to get up here and tell these people something about what's been done to them, what it means—"

Mr. McCall moved his ear away in order to stare at George with both eyes.

"If they'll stand up for their rights they can have better schools for their children, better hospitals for these sick people. Some of these cripples might not be cripples if they'd had the right treatment—"

"Brother, the Lord knows how to care for his own—"

"Hey, mister!"

George looked up at a young man a few yards beyond the preacher surprised his voice had evidently been louder than he realized, though it might have carried because of the ending of the hymn—

"What's all that got to do with Jack Winn?"

He hesitated an instant, grasping only that the opportunity was at last his,—the expected arriving unexpectedly like death—

"I'll tell you what it's got to do with Jack Winn!" He hopped up on the first step; over Mr. McCall's wavy black hair he could see half a dozen faces turn to him. "They arrested Jack Winn because they thought you wouldn't care. They thought you wouldn't say anything; they thought you were too busy with your own affairs to do anything.—Look here! You've all smelled that smoke hanging over these streets from the city dump over there."

"I'll say!"

"That means the trash isn't covered up. That means there're rats over there, millions of 'em. And they get in your houses. They bring you sickness and disease—"

"Get down off the Lord's pulpit!"

The young man said, "Let him talk, Brother Sampey."

"They let that trash go on burning over there because they think you don't care. You've got to stop taking just anything they hand out to you, whether it's a false arrest like Jack Winn or—"

"Get you *down*, man!"

"Knock him off of there!"

"What's the matter that guy—"

"I want you to do just one thing. Show 'em you care! That's all you've got to do—"

He felt something twisting and tugging at his coat. He glanced down and saw Doodye, his pale face growing red. He shoved the boy's thin claws away from him. But the resistance only set Doodye into a more frantic pulling. George felt one of his pockets rip out and a second later Doodye began beating at him with the sides of his closed fists. He caught the boy's bony wrists in his hand. Doodye began to scream and kick at his shins—

Then everything seemed to happen in a burst. Arms and hands and fists sprouting up about him, broad, muscled fingers grabbing at him with a sudden released violence, grabbing his arms and shoulders, digging into him through his clothes, picking him up bodily off the step, carrying him, throwing him, all of it happening too fast for his senses; smashing into this and that, toppling, falling, dropping at a crazy dreamlike angle and, in an instant's pause, feeling the chilled, greasy mud under his hands and the stiff spikes of the broomsedge, his eyes blinking into a blurred canebrake of moving legs and pants, his mind as dazed as his vision. In a moment he recognized a specific fact that seemed of great importance: his glasses were gone. He began feeling about him quickly on the ground among the trampling boots and shoes. From above him and as if from another existence that had nothing to do with him, the great voice of the preacher seemed to beat its way through all the tumbling surf of lesser sounds, "Cast out the unbeliever! Cast him into the wrath of Almighty God!"

He continued padding his hands about in the cool mud, his chest seeming to be conscious of the thick anger-smelling air it had to breathe, his throat demanding to expel it—

"Come on, P'fessor!" He heard the familiar voice grumbling in his ear almost without realizing he was hearing it. "Come on, we getting out of here!"

"I dropped my glasses—"

He felt himself snatched roughly to his feet, up out of the air-dregs into a battering tumult of shouts and curses. He was conscious

of a tough hand on his left arm, the strong fingers gripping his coat sleeve until it felt like a tourniquet, dragging him off helter-skelter through a tangled forest of bodies, misty in their dark indeterminateness, this way and that, with a determined care; shoving him past and round the foggy obstructions, jostling between them, scraping past them, caroming from one to another, pulled on as if in a dream of swimming underwater through the submerged growth of a millpond, the vague forms unfocussed in the milky light, the sound of his breathing, after a few minutes, beginning to come to him like a current hissing among the rocks. Once he felt hands descend upon his other shoulder and the familiar voice rose up like a fist: "Get the Goddam hell off of him!"—his mind still unable to resolve anything about the voice except that it was dreamily familiar.

Emerging after a long time from the living forest of shapes and sounds, "Keep going, P'fessor! Ain't much farther—"

"Jack?"

"Wanna rest?"

He tripped in a depression in the field but Winn held him up, panting at him, "Watch yourself, P'fessor!"

His breath had begun to sting in his chest when he suddenly felt hard ground under his feet. A moment later he was stumbling across cement and Winn was gasping at somebody to get P'fessor a chair. They steered him into a room with the radio playing softly, pushed a chair against the calves of his numb legs. He dropped into it, his shoulders heaving.

"How you making it, P'fessor?"

He wagged his head up and down two or three times,—meaning he didn't want to talk about it, meaning he still hardly knew what had happened beyond a few physical details like spectacles and pockets and mud on his knees and sleeves which made no difference, meaning he wanted to look away from what had really happened, as far away as he could manage to look—

"We made a end run, P'fessor," a heavy hand slapping him encouragingly on the back.

He nodded up and down, asking his lip muscles to let him grin a

little. He heard Mac mumble, "Get him on out of this place, Jack; that crew may come piling on over here," and then in a voice of solicitude, "Where'd you leave your car, Professor? Gimme your keys."

He held out the keys, pointing them in a direction he thought was down the street, down the Upper Road, the Upper Trail—

"I'll get it for him," Mac said, snatching the keyring. "Give him a coke, Jack."

Gradually his breath returned and, as if with it, a consciousness of sounds,—the traffic sounds outside, now and then the patrolman's whistle, a soft sound of singing he took at first to be the radio. Then he realized the singing came from the field and the incident washed over him again in a sort of dim bitter wave that subsided at once into Winn's voice, "Got a wet towel here, P'fessor. Let's see if we can't straighten you up a little bit." Holding back George's head with a hand on his hair and wiping the rough cloth over his skin with a hard-fingered gentleness, stretching his gritty palms out flat and wiping them front and back—

"Thanks."

"There we are."

"Somebody'll have to drive me; I dropped my glasses—"

"Sure, sure—"

When he noticed a feeling of coolness at the side of his leg he put his hand to his trousers; they were torn in a long gash by his knee, but he couldn't remember when it had happened, didn't want to remember,—sitting there with his elbows on his knees gazing with no feeling at all at the vague black object in his fist that he recalled was the coca-cola.

After a while he heard voices outside near the pumps, a jumble of words, then Winn's voice, "Mac's trying to find his car." He lifted his head blankly toward the milky light of the door; if he could send Winn home to bring his other glasses he could find the car himself. He was all right; he wasn't hurt; he felt fine,—except inside, deep inside. And except he couldn't see; there was a form

standing in the light of the door but he couldn't even tell who it was. "That you, Jack?"

There was no answer and his mind returned to unravelling the tangled threads of what had happened, to delving into the now-what; and he could feel his head sinking, as if each inquiring thought added a cumulative weight to it, while beyond them, as though he were on the riverbank at the rapids hearing the continuous chattering of the water over the shale, ran the far-off singing and the closer weave of whistles and motor noises—

And then into all this dreamy consciousness plunged the shattering incomprehensible sensation of someone's arms tight about him. The reality of her face against his was still unbelievable to him, as if it were a cruel trick of his memory; he felt like doubting even the undoubtable scent of her skin, even the sound of her whispered voice and the warm puff of her breath over his mouth, so familiar in its ineffable blending of cleanliness and thinness and soundness—

"Allen!"

"God damn it, darling, are you satisfied now!" her tears wetting his face in a caress that seemed to enter his blood and to sweep away through every artery and vein of his body and mind. The very fact that her features appeared to him almost as if hidden behind a veil of pearl-white silk seemed to make his other senses more eager in their perception of her; he laid his face in the hollow of her neck, her hair falling across his cheek and forehead in a clear faint smell of bath water—

"Excuse me, P'fessor, but Mac's got your car."

She pivoted her head, kissed him heedlessly on the mouth and got up from her knees, pulling him to his feet. "Come on."

"You'll have to drive—"

"I can even do that." Then she exclaimed with an intimate triviality all the dearer to him for its practical possessiveness, "O darling, your best flannel trousers!"

... When he counted the sixth quiet stroke on the Arsenal bell he lifted his head in surprise; the twilight had drained out of the room and the apartment was black except for the street light glancing into

the corner window, but he hadn't thought an hour could have passed. Then the bell struck again and he popped up on his elbow; then it struck again. And he stared intently at the fuzzy window curtains, prepared for it to go on to twelve. But it stopped.

She hadn't moved and he leaned across her and whispered against her ear, "Are you asleep?" prepared for her to wake with a start.

She breathed, "No," stretching out the word in a curious way that sounded smiling.

"That was eight o'clock."

"Well."

"It's time I saw you again."

"You think so?"

"The last time I saw you was in front of the Courthouse and you were handing me a number of very dirty looks. That was about a year ago if I remember right—"

She kissed him quickly. "Where are your glasses?"

He heard her feeling her way across the rug in her stocking feet, sliding among the boxes. She touched a lamp and a veil of cloudy light spread over the bare room; she dug in a corner of his suitcase where he told her and in a minute sat down beside him in the sunken end of the old sofa and put the glasses in his fingers.

He unfolded them and held them in his hand, gazing at her face that now in a breath he could resolve out of its nebula. "Of course I can see you almost as well without them. Maybe I can see you better. I can see how beautiful you are in all the other ways besides being beautiful to look at—"

"I'm not beautiful to look at." She smiled at him and put her face close in front of his eyes. "Can you see why I was such a fool as to go away?"

"I'll need my glasses for that."

She took them out of his hand and laid them on the table. "Maybe you see enough now."

"I can see you're here. And I can see I'd be utterly lost if you weren't—"

"You could close your eyes and see I love you, couldn't you?"

“And I can see you’ve got a hard life ahead of you. And I can see that was your last chance to get away and you muffed it—”

“I’ll go with you anywhere you want to go. Any time. And I’ll like it.”

“It’s Wrightsboro.”

“All right.”

“Tomorrow.”

“I’m used to moving quickly. I’ll go today.”

“I think the new teacher had better marry the girl before he brings her to town with him—”

“Darling, I’ll make an honest man of you any time you say, but it’s not possible to leave me behind. When you go I’m going too. Jane will keep Jeff a few days—listen!”

He heard the exuberant distant blast of the school band in the stadium down the hill, and the week flashed up before his memory like pictures on a screen,—the same tune as before, as full of brass and drums, as exuberant, the crowd funneling in through the gates, laughing, talking back and forth, as confident as if nothing had happened to them, oblivious,—healed. She’s healed! Set her down, brother! And crumpling quietly into the grass—

“That’s the piece they played for us before,—my theme-song.”

“A serenade,” he said, “to celebrate your homecoming.” He put his arms round her and spoke into a corner of her mouth the words of Harry Percy to his wife: “Whither I go, thither shall you go too; Today will I set forth, tomorrow you.”

“Oh, no!” lifting her chin in her strangely warm and merry laugh that was as good to hear as rain or music or wind in the pines or all the beautiful hearable things combined. “I’m going with you.”

“But I have to find a place for us all to live—”

“Poor impractical darling! That’s probably the best thing the war has taught me to do—”

He kissed her while she was speaking; he felt like weeping, for joy and for sorrow also,—for the bright diamond points of love shining through the week’s dark boundless somberness—

WITH A HEAVY sorrow Colonel Clarke pushed his weary body through the resisting flesh-colored water at the edge of the river to a spot where a sycamore tree, undermined by the current, leaned its trunk out over the stream and trailed the outer branches of a bone-white limb in the water, the great blond leaves lifting and swinging in the ripples as if in the breath of a quiet wind. He waded to the upper side and let himself drift down until the top of his head was among the leaves; grasping a handful of the twigs that hung beneath the surface, he knelt there on the slimy shale, the river washing about his mouth and ears and, behind him, foaming and clacking over the rocks and boulders of the rapids.

Again and again through the morning he gazed across the pink swirls straight into the eyes of red-coated officers, of green-coated Rangers in pairs, of solitary bare-chested Creeks and Cherokees with the stench of angry sweat hovering over them like swarms of insects in the summertime; he watched their stares search down the bank, into the leaves about his face, pause, pass on. Once, about midday, a painted Creek, with the sides of his head shaved, stole, silent as a panther, out on the sycamore trunk and lay there sweeping his black eyes up and down the shore, motionless as the wood. Clarke let his face sink slowly out of sight. When he couldn't hold his breath any longer he raised his nose and eyes above the surface, staring through the water-film until he thought he would know the man if he met him ten years later,—a flat-nosed youth of twenty-five or so with a body the color of dried oak leaves, a long raised scar clinging to the side of his chest like a lizard—

When a rod of flame leaped from a driftwood pile on the bank he submerged blindly, the roar of the explosion in his ears, hardly knowing whether he was dead or alive, certain only he had been discovered. With his eyes staring dazed into the stinging opacity, there was another burst of sound close beside him, different from the first but nearly as loud, a wet plunging noise, and coming up to breathe, he saw the arms and legs of the Creek thrashing in the

bloody water as the brown body began to drift toward him. Under the brushwood pile he saw the haggard features of Sergeant Coffey.

During the afternoon the sweet smell of lightwood fires on the hill began to come down to him, though he couldn't see the smoke. The storm of battle had subsided, changed its tone and was growing now into the evil storm of revenge; the shouts and yells were on a new note and even the occasional random shots seemed to split through the forest with a whine of triumph. The thought of the prisoners seemed to open the veins of his body and drain away his strength.

He didn't know whether many had escaped or few; in any case there would be few he would ever see again. Some of McCall's men might have fled along the Lower Road; some of his own might yet reach the Upper when dark came, might creep and crawl, if they were whole, back to Kettle Creek and Long Cane where he had found them. Maybe one day, if a victory somewhere gave them heart again, they would rise once more and return; but that would be another year,—when the wounds in their bodies and in their spirits had healed. Of this venture, which they had planned so long, which had risen before them for a moment crowned with success, nothing was left but the poison of defeat. Was the fault his? That he had misguided them? That he hadn't known how to make them understand? Or did the Almighty, in His great wisdom, mean that freedom should come hard? Easy won, easy lost—

When the shadow of the hill stretched out over the river and the lightwood smoke began to settle down in blue layers across the water on the lifting damp, he raised his shoulders shivering out of the current and tried to signal Coffey. At first dark he saw the limbs of the driftwood pile open; Coffey motioned to him. When he could no longer distinguish the bank he let go the twigs he held and pushed himself shaking to the shore and out of the water; he felt a hand on his arm, warm through the dripping coarse linen. His mind was overflowing with questions, but he was afraid if he tried to form even a whispered syllable he would break down into an old man's sobbing.

They set out at once, neither saying anything, picking their way upstream along the bank, drawing themselves away from the tumult on the hill as they might have dragged their bodies out of the bitter smoke of a conflagration. The stars were at midnight before they reached Rae's Creek, and when they came to the spring, day was breaking. They rested for a few minutes, then worked their way up the slope of the amphitheater to the trail and turned northwestward,—back over the way he had brought them.—They would come again. Maybe not he but, anyhow, somebody,—or somebody else, or somebody else. New levies would rise,—as sure as sap would rise in the gum tree—



SATURDAY MORNING WAS cool and clear and still. The air had a damp fresh core of cold in it and the wet leaves on the trees along the Upper Road seemed to shine, like wet seashells, with more color from their wetness,—wet purple, wet red and yellow—

When he came to the high-tension tower at the top of the rise where he had waited for the bus so short and long a time ago he stopped the car, shut off the motor and got out. The city lay below him in a peace that appeared in no way different from that other day; the light was different and there was a ground mist over the valley as the sun drew up the dampness, but the tall building stood just as square, the church spires pointed upward as imperturbable, the black cables looped as implacable across the sky, tower to tower—"Danger, 44,000 volts." Nothing had changed at all. And on a low feminine crest of rain-washed emerald he could see through a break in the pines a group of Saturday morning golfers strolling down the green.

Could he have been wrong? Did all that matter no more than everyone thought? He remembered a letter once in a local paper: "Could it be that the Creator has His own plans for a system of life on earth that will be perfection, with the blessings of everlasting life

in peace, health and happiness, free from the ravages of war, crime, climactic disasters, destruction and death?" Could it be? Certainly most people behaved as if they thought so.

Well, from their fathers' acts, it looked to him as if the fathers had believed neither nature nor the Creator had any purpose in mind for them beyond what their strength and courage were ready to support to the last extremity. The people, the "common man,"—they just didn't understand, they just couldn't get it straight in their minds. He wondered if he, and many another, weren't going to have to adjust the map inside their heads to the territory as it really was. There was an error in the chart somewhere. There was no channel through there; you would have to go round another way,—or dig one. Maybe democracy was only the best way; maybe it wasn't good enough. Good enough for what? Good enough to save us. Had democracy, any more than the Creator, any purpose in mind beyond what our strength and courage was ready to build with it—

But this was not the end. Somebody would fight again, or somebody else or somebody else. There was something a little fishy about all this that he couldn't put his finger on, but one day he would, or somebody else would. The price of freedom might well be eternal vigilance, but if the greedy ones intended to hold what they had, eternal vigilance was the price to them too; the scornful ones could never rest easy either—

She came round the car beside him and put her hand with his into the pocket of his coat.

Why was his failure so bitterless, his complete and utter failure? It was as if, against the solemn wall of an impending storm that he had been unable to deflect, the lamp at his own desk, at any rate, was burning again. It was Allen, but something else than Allen too. Did he feel he had been, in this day of far-flung bravery, in his way also brave? How's your soul, Mr. Cliatt? Well, truth to tell—

"You are sad."

He put his arms round her chest into the warm air beneath her

coat and pressed her solid body against him, the warmth of her knees and her breasts coming to him through her clothes as the warmth of her life had already flowed into his grayness: "You're the happiest day of my life."

























